Civilization of Faith

Solidarity, Tolerance and Equality in a Nation Built on Shari'ah

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A Journey through Islamic History

Dr. Muṣṭafa as-Sibā'ie

Translated by:

Naṣiruddin al-Khaṭṭāb

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Publisher's Note

Allah (ﷻ) created man and bestowed him with intellectual faculties to use them in worshipping Him, Alone, without associating any human-being or anything. He also made it easy for man to seek ways of decent life fearing Allah and making remembrance of Him throughout his life-time because doing so will give man relief in the spiritual aspect and peace of mind.

When man subjugated his intellectual abilities for making life easy, free of stress and anxiety; he, with the help of Allah the All-Compassionate, built an outstanding civilization and provided noble life to all categories of people as the case was in the days of the grand Muslim state under the guidance of righteous Caliphs, leaders, scientists, philosophers, physicians, scholars, thinkers and workers of all sorts. They succeeded in building the civilized, flourishing, and progressive state that could strike the balance between the spiritual, based on Islamic faith derived from the Noble Qur'an and the Prophetic Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ); and the material, based on the achievements of Muslim scientists, engineers, physicians, religious scholars, philosophers, authors, all guided by the teachings of the Qur'an and the Sunnah.

The turning point was the deviation from the guidance of the teachings of Islam, that started when the leaders, and the states, indulged in internal struggles and material gains to the detriment of the peoples' interests in the religious, spiritual, intellectual, social and every-day-life affairs.

Muslims can, with the help of Allah the Almighty, restore the miraculous supremacy they enjoyed under the reign of the true

Muslim state as the author, Dr. Muṣṭafa as-Sibā'ie, presented in his book *Civilization of Faith*.

Civilization of Faith is a beautiful research work of the author. It shows how the Islamic state and its Muslim citizens of all categories enjoyed a grand civilization and an affluent living when steadfastness in faith prevailed: faith in Allah, His Book, and the Sunnah of His last prophet and messenger (ﷺ).

Hoping that all readers of this book will benefit from it, I honestly appreciate the efforts of Dr. as-Sibā'ie, may Allah have mercy on him.

This is the revised and improved edition of the English translation. All Praise be to Allah the Lord of the worlds and peace and blessings be upon His messenger, Muhammad the seal of the prophets.

Muhammad 'Abdul-Muḥsin Al Tuwaijri
International Islamic Publishing House
Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
1426 AH / 2005 CE

Translator's Foreword

We are living at a time when western civilization is at its peak and the Muslim nations are at their weakest point, dazzled by the power of the west with its wealth, means and scientific and technological advantages. Muslims who do not read history may well be unaware of the fact that this has not always been the case. A few hundred years ago, it was just the opposite. The Muslim ummah was the superpower of the age and were the leaders in culture, science and technology. The cities of the Muslim world were centres of learning to which people came from far and wide, including — as in the case of Muslim Spain — from the lands of Christian Europe. Indeed, the west had to learn from the Muslims, and parts of their classical heritage was only preserved and made available to them through the medium of Arabic translations of Greek texts. In mathematics, medicine, astronomy and other fields, the Muslims transmitted the knowledge of the ancients, augmented with their own developments and discoveries. This knowledge, which the west took from the Muslims, sparked the Renaissance and ushered in the modern age. The achievements of modern western civilization may thus be traced back to the flourishing Muslim world.

The Muslims at one time were the most technologically advanced civilization on earth, but the uniqueness of their civilization lies in the fact that, although they achieved a great deal in materialistic terms, they remained a compassionate society where the poor and disadvantaged were cared for. This was something the like of which had never been seen in any other

civilization. This care was arranged at the social level, not imposed or organized by the government. There were houses to accommodate those who could not afford housing, rather like the public housing projects of today. There were *waqfs* (endowments) that helped people to get married, so that they did not have to remain single. There were *waqfs* to feed the poor and provide milk and sugar, water to mothers of small children. The sick were cared for in hospitals where medical treatment was available to all, free of charge. The disabled were cared for in homes and hospices, with people employed to help them get about and live decently. Libraries opened their doors to all seekers of knowledge, and education was freely available to all, not just the sons of the "privileged" classes.

This book is a reminder to Muslims that they have a glorious past and that for many centuries they had the upper hand over their enemies. They became masters of the world at the time when they adhered to Islam; when they became preoccupied with worldly gain and the pursuit of luxury, then decline set in.

That promise still exists in the Qur'an:

﴿وَعَدَ ٱللَّهُ ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ مِنكُمْ وَعَمِلُوا۟ ٱلصَّٰلِحَٰتِ لَيَسْتَخْلِفَنَّهُمْ فِى ٱلْأَرْضِ كَمَا ٱسْتَخْلَفَ ٱلَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ وَلَيُمَكِّنَنَّ لَهُمْ دِينَهُمُ ٱلَّذِى ٱرْتَضَىٰ لَهُمْ وَلَيُبَدِّلَنَّهُم مِّنۢ بَعْدِ خَوْفِهِمْ أَمْنًا ۚ يَعْبُدُونَنِى لَا يُشْرِكُونَ بِى شَيْـًٔا ۚ وَمَن كَفَرَ بَعْدَ ذَٰلِكَ فَأُو۟لَٰٓئِكَ هُمُ ٱلْفَٰسِقُونَ ﴿٥٥﴾﴾

[سورة النور: ٥٥]

﴿Allah has promised those among you who believe and do righteous good deeds, that He will certainly grant them succession to [authority] on the land, as He granted

it to those before them, and that He will surely establish for them their religion which He has chosen for them [i.e. Islam]. And He will surely, substitute for them, security after their fear [provided] they [believers] worship Me and do not associate anything [in worship] with Me. But whoever disbelieves after this, they are the *Fāsiqūn* [rebellious, disobedient to Allah].﴾ *(Qur'an 24: 55)*

If the Muslims adhere to Islam and take their religion seriously, they will, once again, be supported by Allah and will again be able to lead the world in all spheres of life.

Naṣiruddin al-Khaṭṭāb

Author's Foreword

Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds, and may the blessings of Allah be upon the builder of the noblest civilization history has ever known, our master Muhammad, and upon his family and Companions who built this great civilization with their blood and striving, to whom everyone who has enjoyed the blessings of this civilization owes a debt of immense gratitude until the Day of Judgement.

In the current age, which has surpassed all ages of the past in its material developments and scientific discoveries, social scientists, psychologists and medical doctors in the west stand helpless in the face of the huge increase in the numbers of people suffering from nervous disorders. The entire world is enveloped in an atmosphere of anxiety and fear so great that people — especially in the advanced countries — cannot even enjoy the life of ease and luxury that civilization has brought them. Thus, the dreams that were entertained by scientists and thinkers in the nineteenth century, that all people would attain happiness because of their brilliant scientific discoveries, have begun to fade.

It is worth pointing out that the problem of anxiety and stress gets worse the easier life becomes for people. The incidence of mental illness in the developed countries is greater than in the more backward countries. This is clearly indicated by the statistics for the United States.

The anxiety which is dominating people's lives is not only a result of two world wars and the likelihood of a third; rather it stems from the psychological environment that is produced by modern civilization. It is not created only by the effects of colonialism, even though colonialism is the greatest cause of distress suffered by the oppressed peoples who live under its shadow. But that distress is also suffered, now, by people who have not been colonized, and by people who are enjoying the fruits of colonialism. Indeed, this stress is to be found everywhere, no matter what the prevailing religion or modern ideology. Just as we may find this stress among all the peoples of the east, so too, we find it among the peoples of the west and the peoples of the Soviet Union.[1]

It is significant in this context to note the high incidence of suicide among civilized peoples. It is strange that this happens in countries which are considered to enjoy the highest standards of living and of civilization, such as the Scandinavian countries. Even stranger than that is the fact that the people there commit suicide because they are bored with the life of luxury they are living!

From this we may see that this anxiety and stress, and the moral deviance that has reached such a level that it is causing panic among parents in the west; all stem from modern western civilization itself, and from its prevailing philosophical bases.

[1] This book was originally written in the 1960s.

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Western civilization developed — as is well known — as a result of western contact with the Islamic civilization via the Arab institutions of learning in Andalusia and other Muslim regions. Greek philosophy was among the matter studied by Muslim thinkers and philosophers, so the western scholars transmitted the philosophy and books of the Greeks from the Arabs under whom they studied. They devoted a great deal of effort to studying this philosophy despite the intense persecution of the Church early on. Then western minds were opened and they began to see facts in a manner different from that propagated by the Church. There was a lengthy conflict between the Church and science, until finally science defeated the Church, after the scientists and philosophers had been tortured, imprisoned, excommunicated and persecuted. The western Renaissance flourished, with two important characteristics: Greek philosophy with its materialistic and idolatrous character, and enmity towards religion, the clergy and the power of the Church. It was under the influence of these two characteristics that the opinions of western thinkers were formed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and the various philosophical and moral trends, which dominate western minds to this day, developed.

The bases on which modern western civilization are built are materialistic, far removed from any spiritual or religious influence on the souls of individuals or societies. Religion continued to lose its influence over westerners, little by little, until westerners found themselves in this state of crisis and deep, overwhelming anxiety. Their thinkers and intellectuals now wish that they could make up for what they are lacking in spirituality,

but how can they do that when the tree has already borne fruit and sent down deep roots?

If we realize that one of the characteristics of religion — whichever of the divinely revealed religions it is[2] — is to give people some measure of peace of mind and spiritual comfort, and to help them cope with the burdens of life and to control their whims and desires, as Islam did when Arabic civilization was at its peak and at the point of greatest expansion, then we would be able to understand the misery that western civilization inflicted upon its people when it shut religion — in the sense of the pure divine message — out of public life and reduced its effectiveness in generating hope, resolution, sacrifice and compassion in the hearts of individuals and societies.

We are not here to judge between western civilization and the religion that it confronted and wrestled with from its beginning. Rather it will be sufficient to point out the cause of western civilization's inability to bring happiness and peace of mind to people. For it found itself forced to follow a course far removed from religion, which it opposed thinking that it could walk alone with no need for any other religion to give life to its spirit or

[2] There is only one divine religion - Islam since the creation of mankind. The Qur'an is very explicit about it. The religions besides Islam attributing their divine origin are, in fact, without any basis. Prophets Noah, Abraham, Job and Jesus all preached Oneness of divinity, concept of messengership and the Hereafter. Judaism, Christianity etc., were never revealed as separate religions and these names. Even the Scriptures as available today testify this fact. With the last of the messengers, Muhammad, the divine message is completed for all the times. (IIPH)

conscience. We see nowadays a sincere desire on the part of the Church to cooperate with the state — in many western countries — to alleviate the sufferings that their civilization has inflicted upon their people. We have witnessed that in every western country that we have visited, and we have seen that this manifests itself in many different ways.

Anyone who visits Switzerland nowadays will find that a regular feature of life there is the Salvation Army band, which was founded by the Church. This band, which includes youth, old men, young women and children, goes around in the main squares and parks on Sundays, singing church hymns accompanied by music, so that those who wish may gather around and listen.

In London the visitor to Hyde Park (Speakers' Corner) may see groups of people engaging in free speech, especially on Sundays. Among the speakers are preachers from the Church who try to attract a greater number of people by using the most eloquent words. Similarly in areas where there are a lot of cinemas one may see a man standing on a stepladder carried by a colleague of his, preaching to the people and explaining the religion to them. One night I saw a man standing near the door of one of the cinemas, in the middle of the street, preaching to the people and warning them against those houses of temptation and immorality. He was doing that in a loud voice which drew the stares of people, and within sight and sound of the police, but no one objected to that. Those who wanted to, stopped and listened to him, but I did not see anyone who was affected by his words and turned away from the door of the cinema!

It is very common nowadays in Europe and America for every church to have a club where the youth — both boys and girls — come to dance and spend the evening, and which

organizes trips and parties. I visited one of these clubs in Europe, which was in part of the church building, and I saw that it was no more than a place to get together in the evening, to sing and dance, eat and drink. I asked the person in charge — who was telling me about the club and its budget and activities — "Do you offer any religious teaching or preach to the members of the club?" He answered in the negative! So I asked him, "What benefit does the church get from spending on this club, when it is more akin to clubs that have nothing to do with the church?" He said, "At least when the boys and girls walk through the churchyard on their way to the club they will remember that there is something that is called a church!"

In some European countries hotel guests will find a copy of the Bible next to their beds, a gift from the Friends of the Bible (also known as the Gideons) so that he can read from it before he goes to sleep or when he wakes up, as a reminder to him of his religion and belief.

In most European universities there are societies which go by the name of Christian Students. They hold weekly meetings in which men from the church address them and teach them about their religion, and any student who wishes may go and join in the discussion.

In West Germany the government collects a special tax from the German people in the name of the Church, to help the Church to undertake projects aimed at spreading the religion. When I was in the University Hospital of Cologne in Germany, directly opposite my bed there was a huge bronze cross fixed to the wall. I noticed something similar in every room in the hospital, even in the administration offices and doctors' rooms. I asked what was the reason for this and they told me that this was one of the results

of Church activities, to remind the people of their religion. This was despite the fact that the hospital belonged to the University and has no direct connection to the Church.

And let us not forget the religious films that are produced by Hollywood, the large number of which attracts attention and gives pause for thought.

Many of us have heard of the society for a return to morality which is widespread in Europe. They visited some of the Middle Eastern and Far Eastern countries, including Cairo, and I have visited their headquarters in Switzerland, near Lausanne. This group apparently promotes the characteristics of virtue, compassion, justice and so on.

These are some aspects of the new religious and moral activities in western countries, which clearly indicates that the people have started to think about benefitting from religion in order to reduce the harms caused by their civilization. We can be certain that the clergy, scholars of ethics and sociologists have lost control. It is now too late and the crisis is deepening day by day, until this civilization will inevitably meet its end.

One of the motives for the return to religion in Europe as a means of raising the spiritual awareness of the masses is their fear of communism[3] and of its spread. But because religion had ended up so weak and because of the many doubts that resulted from the spread of the philosophy of western civilization itself, religion has become incapable of resisting the current wave of communism in

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[3] This book was written in 1960s and communism was then flourishing with its HQ at Soviet Union - Russia (USSR). It became only a part of history after the end of USSR in 1995, when it entered Afghanistan. Gorbacheve was the last ruler of the USSR. (IIPH)

the west, so it had no choice but to resist it by means of social and economic plans. For a materialistic mentality such as that of the west cannot understand or accept anything but that which is material.

But communism itself is one of the deviant products of this civilization! It is one of the worst and most dangerous forms of western civilization.

The philosophy of Marx and Engels, two German Jews, emerged in the eighteenth century, and made matters worse, creating a huge gulf between man and psychological or spiritual stability. This ideology took away man's belief in God and the Last Day, and made him lose confidence in the moral and ethical values that had remained constant since the dawn of human history, in which societies have always sought protection and collective security. The first communist state in the modern world was established and it managed to improve the standard of living of its people, as compared to what they had endured before, but it was not able — and it will never be able, with its materialistic philosophy — to save its people from all kinds of anxiety and fears, whether psychological or social. Indeed, it added even more fears to those, because it caused its people to fear for their lives if they dared to criticize the regime or its methods. The fear that filled the hearts of Party members themselves was far greater than the fear that filled the hearts of the ordinary citizens of the communist state, because the Party member must be enthusiastic about the opinions of Party leaders and motivated to support them blindly, or else he will inevitably be liquidated.

By denying God and rejecting all forms of religion, the communist philosophy took away the last weapon that man possessed to fight fear, anxiety, calamity, selfishness and hostility.

Communist states — no matter where they are — with their oppressive rule and bloody use of terror, made the masses under their rule like a flock of human sheep, with no will to pursue the moral standards that all noble societies strive to achieve.

Thus both branches of western civilization, capitalism and communism, have taken away man's peace of mind, security and moral standards and replaced that ideal with materialism, so that if a person cannot achieve that he will live a life of misery, but if he does achieve it he will live a life of boredom from which there is no escape except suicide!

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Westerners began to realize that their civilization was spiritually and morally bankrupt, and many of them began to turn towards the east, hoping to find in eastern religions something to fill their spiritual vacuum and show them the way back to a noble humanity. So it is little wonder that we see some of them — especially in America — embracing Buddhism and Baha'ism. Those who embrace Islam are of two types: those for whom Islam satisfies their hearts and intellects, and those for whom Islam satisfies their soul and conscience.

One day Professor Abu Bakr,[4] the English Muslim Orientalist, who was a professor of English at Fu'ad University (now Cairo University) and had embraced Islam in Cairo, and is now working as head of the Oriental section of the British Library

[4] I am writing this introduction with no access to my journals, private papers or library, and I cannot remember his English name. He is well known to the professors of Cairo University.

in London, told me, as he was explaining to me the reasons why he had embraced Islam, that this western civilization had lost all honour and beauty. I said to him,

"There is no dispute that it has lost its honour, but as for it losing its beauty, how can that be when people see it as being the civilization that has paid the most attention to beauty, the beauty of nature, the beauty of clothing, the beauty of cities, the beauty of houses, and also the beauty of women?" He said: "But it has lost the beauty of spirit and the beauty of natural taste and the beauty of attitude."

In the summer of 1956 I gave a Friday *khuṭbah* (sermon) in the mosque of Paris. Among the things of which I spoke — on the occasion of the anniversary of the Prophet's birth — was the Islamic message of mercy and justice, and how that was manifested in the Islamic conquests and dealings with conquered peoples. I also hinted at the Algerian war and the bloody atrocities that had made it the greatest massacre in history. After the *khuṭbah* was over, among the worshippers whom I met there was Muṣṭafa Falsan. He was of Romanian origin and had been the Romanian consul in Paris, then he had embraced Islam and left his diplomatic career behind. Thereafter, he was leading a group of French youth who had embraced Islam out of conviction and sincerity, but who were keeping a low profile. They used to meet at his house once a week, wearing white eastern garments. Some of them had let their beards grow, even though they were very young. They would read the Qur'an and study Islam together. This shaykh, Muṣṭafa Falsan, said to me:

"I heard you speaking about mercy in the Islamic conquests, perhaps you meant by that to deny the fabrications of the westerners against Islam, whereby they accuse Islam of harshness and cruelty in its wars. Do not waste your energy on that, for every nation has characteristics by which it is known, and one of the main features of westerners is hypocrisy in claiming to be merciful!"

One of the Arab Muslims was talking to a group of these French Muslim youths about the greatness of Islam and how Islam encourages development and progress. He got carried away, as if he was speaking in an Arab country that is striving for power and glory, for he started to affirm that Islam calls for strength and the manufacture of tanks and aeroplanes, and so on. One of them said to him,

"My brother, we have fled from western civilization to Islam because it shattered our nerves with its wars and weapons. It took away our humanity when it killed our spirits and awoke our desires with its materialistic nature. So tell us about the spirituality of Islam in which we found our human dignity and peace of mind."

A Swiss girl who lives in Paris and works as a specialist in mapping brain waves told me:

"I am a poor girl, what my family sends me is not enough to buy food in this commercial city. Despite that, as you can see, it is an immoral city that makes people more like starving wild animals! I thought that I could work as a servant for some family to help secure a living for myself, so I looked for a position with an eastern family in the hope that I might find a spiritual atmosphere that would preserve my dignity and humanity. I agreed to work for an Indian (Hindu) family for a certain number of hours each day, but I am sorry to say that I did not find what I was looking for, as I found that they have yellow souls!"

These are some examples of how westerners have started to seek a spiritual life that will bring them comfort, after their materialistic civilization has filled their hearts and lives with pain, confusion and anxiety. You can see this if you speak to any westerner who is balanced in his thinking and has any kind of spiritual and moral sense.

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Western civilization represents the pinnacle of human achievement in purely material terms, but that is not the only thing that makes man happy, as we have seen. Rather there must inevitably come a new civilization that will continue this material progress and also lead mankind to a lofty spiritual life alongside that material achievement, so that there will be a constant balance between these two aspects of life, the material and the spiritual, and neither will be allowed to prevail at the expense of the other. Is it possible for such a civilization to exist? Is there any nation that could play this role?

The western world is unable to play the expected role, because it is currently at the peak of its civilization, material strength and pride. When it collapses it will have lost all the factors that qualify it to lead the world towards the sought-after security and dignity.

The communist world is even less qualified to play that role, because of its greater emphasis on the material and its war against spirituality and against religious and moral values. They will share with the west in increasing the world's woes and misery, until this civilization collapses around its people in the west and in the east.

The oriental world with its idolatrous religions will not be able to play this role, because civilization is based on knowledge, sound thinking and keeping away from myths and legends; idolatry in and of itself is the opposite of all that. The spirituality that the world needs in the hoped-for civilization is a positive and constructive spirituality that will feature in man's continued progress; oriental idolatrous spirituality is a negative spirituality that seeks to escape life and avoid responsibility; it regards material development as something unclean from which man must cleanse himself and which is to be fought against.

There is no one who can play this role of leading civilization apart from one nation, which is our nation. No one is able to carry the banner of tomorrow's civilization but us. That is for the following reasons:

1. We are the bearers of the most refined belief-system known to any civilization. This is the belief in *Tawḥīd* (Divine oneness), the purest and clearest form of monotheism. It is *Tawḥīd* based on knowledge, it respects intellect and continually urges us to pursue the unknown and find out about it. It is a humane and moderate belief system, far removed from the extremes that emphasize mercy at the expense of justice or vice-versa, or that emphasize love at the expense of duty or vice-versa. It is a belief system based on laws that seek to make things easier, to attain people's best interests, to fulfil the individual's interests within the interests of the larger society, to ensure that the society's interests are met but not at the expense of the individual's interests, to fulfil the interests of the ummah (nation) within the framework of the international interests of mankind, and to fulfil the interests of mankind as a whole without erasing the distinctive features of various nations and peoples and not at the expense of their dignity.

2. We have a positive, constructive spirituality, a spirituality that accompanies the soldier when he goes into battle, the worker in his factory, the scholar in his research, the philosopher in his study, the judge in his court, the employee in his office, the president in his role of leadership. It accompanies each person at work and at play, in motion and at rest, night and day, in ease and in hardship, in sickness and in health. It does not make him focus on one thing and neglect another, rather it makes him strive to attain perfection in all things, and it reminds him of Allah (ﷻ) Who created him, of the earth on which he is living, of the people with whom he is living, of this world of which he is a part, and of the fact that peoples are all enslaved to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds.

3. We have proven in the past that we are capable of building such a civilization. Whatever our opponents and detractors may say, no one can deny that it was more merciful towards people than modern western civilization, it was more sublime in character, more just in its rulings, more noble of spirit, closer to the ideal to which man has aspired in all ages and in all stages of civilization. Because we were able to establish that brilliant, humane civilization during times of scientific and intellectual backwardness, we should be more able to establish such a civilization at a time of scientific progress in which new things are gradually being discovered in the universe.

When we seize the reins of the hoped-for civilization, we will not take the fact of man's reaching space to mean that there is no God, and we will not use rockets and missiles that threaten other nations and peoples as a means of keeping them under our control. We will not use broadcast media as means of misguiding people or cinema as a means of temptation or women as a means of physical

enjoyment. We will not use the progress of our civilization as a means to abuse backward peoples, exploit their resources and subject them to humiliation.

These are the reasons, or some of the reasons, why we are the only nation[5] that deserves to carry the banner of civilization after the westerners, to develop a new civilization that will reduce the misery of mankind, and bring them a greater share of security, peace of mind and stability.

If we go back to the roots of our belief, we will find that our revealed Book clearly points to the uniqueness of this nation and how it, among all the nations of earth, deserves to play the leading role that is needed by mankind in the modern age. This is not because we are distinct from others in racial, national or intellectual terms — for Islam has never believed in such myths — but because of the first and second reasons which we mentioned above, which make us different from others.

The verse from the Qur'an in which Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿كُنتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ تَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَتَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنكَرِ وَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ ... ﴿١١٠﴾﴾ [سورة آل عمران: ١١٠]

﴿You [true believers in Islamic Monotheism, and real followers of Prophet Muhammad and his Sunnah] are the best of peoples ever raised up for mankind; you enjoin *al-Ma'rūf* [i.e. Islamic Monotheism and all that is right] and forbid *al-Munkar* [polytheism, disbelief and all that is wrong], and you believe in Allah...﴾ *(Qur'an 3: 110)*

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[5] 'Nation' here means 'the believers in Islam' and not the people of any particular country, religion, race or colour. (IIPH)

— indicates that the characteristics of our belief-system and morals qualify us to be the best nation ever raised up for mankind.

The verse in which Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿ٱلَّذِينَ إِن مَّكَّنَّٰهُمْ فِى ٱلْأَرْضِ أَقَامُوا۟ ٱلصَّلَوٰةَ وَءَاتَوُا۟ ٱلزَّكَوٰةَ وَأَمَرُوا۟ بِٱلْمَعْرُوفِ وَنَهَوْا۟ عَنِ ٱلْمُنكَرِ ۗ ... ﴿٤١﴾﴾ [سورة الحج: ٤١]

﴿[And they are] those who, if We give them authority in the land, establish prayer and give Zakah and enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong...﴾ *(Qur'an 22: 41)*

— points to the characteristics of our civilization which make it the best civilization ever raised up for mankind.

The verse in which Allah (ﷻ) says,

﴿وَكَذَٰلِكَ جَعَلْنَٰكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا لِّتَكُونُوا۟ شُهَدَآءَ عَلَى ٱلنَّاسِ وَيَكُونَ ٱلرَّسُولُ عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيدًا ۗ ... ﴿١٤٣﴾﴾ [سورة البقرة: ١٤٣]

﴿Thus have We made of you an Ummah justly balanced, that you might be witnesses over the nations and the Messenger [Muhammad] a witness over yourselves...﴾ *(Qur'an 2: 143)*

— places on our shoulders the responsibility to convey the message and carry out the mission of leading mankind and showing them the path of truth and goodness for all time, not just in one era or generation.

We responded to the divine call once and took up the banner, and led mankind to security, guidance and light, then we gave it up and ran away from that mission. But this verse is urging us to take up the banner once again and to raise up the torch once again so that we may save the people who, today, are lost in the darkness

of fear, anxiety, whims and desires, wrongdoing and crushing despair, and who can find no other way out of that, apart from suicide, whereby individuals commit suicide with weapons and lethal poisons, and peoples commit suicide with atomic bombs and hydrogen bombs!

— 6 —

There are two kinds of people who will not take this idea of our leading a new civilization seriously.

The first type are those who have been enslaved by western civilization, which has robbed them of confidence in their own ummah's ability to stand on an equal footing with the westerners, let alone to assume a position of leadership. Our ummah has suffered a lot of problems because of these people, and they have spread many bad ideas. We praise Allah that their numbers have started to shrink little by little, because they have seen the follies and crimes of this civilization against their own people and against the oppressed peoples. Intellectual and political awareness have developed among our ummah to a point where we may be optimistic about the outcome. Since we are no longer under the control of the colonialist west, the old-fashioned kind of political leaders who thought independence impossible have disappeared. By the same token, the cultural enslavement to western civilization will also come to an end, and we will rid ourselves of those old-fashioned intellectual and liberal leaders who in fact are no more than symptoms of ignorance, enslavement and stupidity!

The second type are those who believe that the collapse of western civilization is imminent after its evils have increased so greatly, but they do not share our optimism that we will be able to

play a leading role in the new civilization when we are in the state we are in, with such a huge gap between us and the nations who are ahead of us, and they think that speaking in terms of leadership at this point is a kind of imagination swayed by emotion.

When we speak of this matter, we do not claim that the collapse of western civilization and the transfer of leadership to our ummah will be completed in ten years or twenty years or even half a century. The rise and fall of civilizations occurs according to a natural cycle that does not vary. If defects appear in the foundations of a strong fortress, it may appear quite strong for a long time, even though it is doomed to collapse and become a pile of rubble.

From the beginning of our renaissance we have passed through a number of stages in a natural sequence. We awoke to the painful reality of colonialism, then we expelled the colonialists from some of our lands, and we will soon expel them from the rest. We have begun to learn how to organize our lives in accordance with the standards of modern civilization, which is the civilization that is prevalent. Then we started to gain power and make use of the resources of our own lands, and we started to do away, as much as possible, with the manufactured products of the west. The goal we are trying to achieve right now is to catch up with the civilized nations so that we will be similar to them in terms of power and standard of living. At this point we should define for ourselves a reference point according to which we may set standards derived from our own civilization in the light of the problems of modern civilization and our own needs and circumstances. We should also define the next steps before the current stage comes to an end, and decide whether to stay in the orbit of modern civilization and follow the footsteps of those who

went before us hundreds of years ago, enduring the same struggles and devoting all our attention to catching up with them and becoming like them; or should we define for ourselves another path to help us advance without going through the same difficulties and troubles as those faced by the civilized nations?

Realistically, we cannot — within the next few years — reach the same level of material strength as the westerners have reached. It is not easy for us, within such a short period of time, to have satellites in space and missiles capable of crossing continents. Even if we suppose that we could achieve that in a few years, the west would have gone further ahead in these fields at the same time.

The correct way is to continue consolidating our strength as best as we can, whilst setting new standards of civilization for ourselves and for mankind as a whole. We have the potential to be independent in choosing the right path for civilization, and we have enough time to study the fatal mistakes and problems, not for the sake of avoiding them at this stage, for that is impossible, but to avoid them and take a different course at a later stage, which is possible if we believe in our methods and standards that have been proven to be sound through experience and if we believe in the makers of civilization, i.e., our great people whose ambition has never died and who have never given up the struggle, and who never surrendered to the invaders despite the intensity of the persecution and repeated onslaughts and betrayals.

If we do that, we will have created the greatest turning-point in human history in the modern age. If we gain spiritual and moral control over the two great continents of Asia and Africa, that will make them happier and more secure and peaceful than the other continents. At that point the exhausted and lost western world will

have no choice but to turn to us for something to relieve its misery and pain. Then leadership of civilization and the power to decide the course of history will be transferred to us before a few lunatics decide to put an end to the human race!

Maybe I am getting carried away with dreams, for the events of history do not happen in any organized fashion, except in the minds of writers, and who knows what will happen tomorrow? This world is full of surprises, and something may happen on one side of the earth that will affect those living on the opposite side. But this does not mean that we should not think independently of our future. The events of history are wrought by the hand of Allah through the views of thinkers and the calls of the Prophets and reformers.

— 7 —

The subject-matter of this book is based on some talks which I broadcast on Damascus Radio during the period from 20 Muharram 1375 AH (8 September 1955) to 23 Rabee' ath-Thāni 1375 AH (15 December 1955), in which I gave examples of the marvelous aspects of our civilization. These are things that would still impress any fair-minded enquirer. I did not list all the marvelous aspects of our civilization, nor did I intend to analyze them in any systematic manner, because I was speaking to a mass audience whose levels of education and intellect varied widely. My main concern was that they should be heard by those who would listen to the word and follow the best thereof (cf. *az-Zumar* 39: 18), the best of our youth and intellectuals who believe that we enjoy a dignified position before Allah and in history. I did not have the time to continue these radio talks, because I was

preparing to travel to some western countries for the purpose of academic research in 1956. I wanted to speak of many things, including the examples of positive spirituality in the history of our civilization, those who had deep faith in Allah and who adhered to the truth, who had great ambitions, joyful souls, beauty of character, compassion towards people and justice in their rulings; those who also contributed to civilization and were involved in life, whether they were kings, scholars, ascetics, philosophers, commanders, rulers, merchants or workers, men and women, old and young, rich and poor; they were all examples of human perfection who lived, not in the imaginations of philosophers and wise men, but on the face of the earth with the people of the earth.

This positive spirituality, as manifested in these brilliant examples, is one of the characteristics that distinguish our civilization from all other civilizations, ancient and modern. History has known many spiritual men from various nations, especially from the nations of the Far East, and nowadays there are people who are inclined towards pure spirituality, but they are all passive with regard to civilization and think of themselves as being above contributing to civilization, preferring to live in their hermitages or on mountaintops or in caves and deserts. The spiritual examples of our civilization, on the other hand, took part in the struggle to build life with all the work, effort and sacrifice that is required. This is the marvelous secret behind these wondrous spiritual examples in the history of civilization.

The aim now is to spread these talks further and draw attention to these wonders as evidence that we are able to build a better civilization, and to remind the new generation of our ummah of their duty to build a noble, human civilization just as their forefathers did. This is the best time for such a reminder, for

our ummah is now re-entering the arena of history with all the motivation and energy to build a better future. Our ummah still has something of the characteristics of its forefathers, and if it hears of the glorious stories of its civilization, it will be highly motivated to take action and work hard.

This discussion of our marvellous past is not intended to claim that everything in our civilization is bright and beautiful. There is no civilization in history that does not have its black spots. Rather the point is to confirm that the eternal human aspects of our civilization are stronger and more beautiful than any negative aspects. Thus we may refute the lies of those who attribute every kind of fault and shortcoming to our civilization and try to remove its name from the list of authentic civilizations. What we are seeking to achieve here is to thwart the plot of those who are trying to divert the attention of our new generation from the marvellous legacy of our civilization and attract them to a civilization whose lethal flaws have become all too clear, and to the history of nations for which, for every page of good characteristics, thousands of pages of shortcomings and immorality could be written. This is the goal of colonialism, for which it is striving hard, and this is what its lackeys and proponents are doing, they keep on glorifying its civilization.

If I have given some examples of the marvels of our civilization in this book, I hope that other researchers who study the history of our civilization will complete what I have started, describing the wonders of our civilization in a more complete and detailed manner, so as to give the current generation a full picture of the marvels of the civilization which spread light and life during the Middle Ages. For there is no future for a nation that is ignorant of its past, no future for a nation that denies its

characteristics and virtues at the time when those virtues and characteristics are so strongly connected to the idea of civilization. If looking back at the past in order to weep is the attitude of the lazy, then ignoring it and despising it, despite its abundant good, is the attitude of the hate-filled and ignorant. It is good for us to benefit from our treasures in building our renaissance, so that our renaissance will be secure, based on factors which will guarantee success and continuity and clear features aimed at dignity and tranquility, with its glory connected to the glory of the past and of the future, so that its progress will continue and the circle will be completed.

We seek the pleasure of Allah, and He is the Source of strength.

Muṣṭafa Ḥusni as-Sibā'ie

Preface

Dr. ʻAdnān Zarzoor

Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds, and blessings and peace be upon our master Muhammad who was sent as a mercy to the worlds, and upon his Companions and those who follow his guidance and preach his call until the Day of Judgement. O' Allah, make us among those who call people to goodness and truth, and make us steadfast in following Your straight path, the path of those on whom You have bestowed Your Grace, not (the way) of those who earned Your Anger, nor of those who went astray.

These chapters which were written by our teacher Muṣṭafa as-Sibāʻie and which speak of the marvels of our civilization — and how wonderful it is to be connected to such a glorious civilization! — need no introduction. This book was published during the lifetime of our teacher (may Allah have mercy on him) and he himself took on the mission of introducing the book and explaining the reasons why he wrote and published it.

These chapters were first published seventeen years ago — when copies of the book were given to some students just before they graduated from university, to encourage them to strive hard and pray for steadfastness in adhering to the right path. But when those original readers come back and read the book again, they still find that they must write some comments, ideas and thoughts, in the margins of the book.

— 1 —

This valuable book may not need those comments, apart from new examples and further evidence, which would not add anything substantial to the book. But the introduction and the first and second chapters may require further explanation. Our teacher (may Allah have mercy on him) spoke at length of the bankruptcy of western civilization, and of his belief that the Muslims could play the hoped-for role as a civilizing force... He also outlined the main features of Islamic civilization, as he had discovered them through his extensive reading and through his brilliant and insightful analysis of civilization. This insight never left him during his life, no matter what the situation, even though the ways in which he expressed it may have varied, in his *khuṭbahs*, articles, discussions, lectures and books. His book *'Udhama'una fit-Tārīkh* (*The Great Men of our History*) was no more than the final version of his discussion of the wonders of our civilization and the brilliant face of Islamic civilization. This is beside the fact that he was always pointing out — as we heard from him more than once — the importance of writing on these topics, and he promised to continue this work.

— 2 —

Professor as-Sibā'ie said in his introduction to this book:

"There is no one who can play this role of leading civilization apart from one nation, which is our nation. No one is able to carry the banner of tomorrow's civilization but us."

Then he explained that by stating that we are the bearers of the most sublime belief, belief in *Tawḥīd* (Divine Oneness) that is not contaminated in any way, for it is a belief that respects reason, as well as being a belief of moderate human attitude and legislation that is aimed at making things easy, seeking human interests in a manner that achieves balance between the individual and the society, between the ummah and mankind as a whole.

Then he explained that this is because we have a positive and constructive spirituality, and we have proven in the past that we are capable of establishing such a hoped-for civilization.

By the same token we may also understand the reasons for the bankruptcy of western civilization, which has fallen into the mire of self-interest and idolatry, and has lost its proper outlook on the universe, thus splitting man in the strangest manner between this world and the Hereafter, between intellect and emotion, between religion and science, to such an extent that European thought found itself in crisis because of this materialistic approach, whereby science is held in high esteem and reason is sanctified, whilst other aspects of man apart from the material and intellectual are rejected and denied. Thus the westerner's thoughts and feelings were overwhelmed by pessimism, characterized by boredom, fragmentation, rebellion and loss, which our teacher referred to in part. We may have space to confirm that here by referring to some phenomena which have emerged in recent years, however it will suffice us to refer to the loss of the last drop of courage that is needed by the would-be suicide... For now the European individual seeks to escape by means of evil actions, alcohol, drugs and promiscuity. When a society loses its strong foundation — namely its youth — to entertainment, drugs or the grave, this proves that it has lost all credibility. The state of

bankruptcy of which our teacher spoke when he mentioned the phenomenon of suicide in a country like Sweden, for example, is now even worse. We do not wish to speak of this aspect, but we do want to affirm the Professor's point of view concerning the role of religious belief and positive spirituality — as opposed to the negative spirituality that still prevails in some parts of the third world — in moulding civilizations. The fact that we are qualified to play this role in the world today is confirmed by the people of European civilization themselves. It is sufficient here for us to quote the strong words spoken by the surgeon and philosopher Albert Aschfitzer who said:

> "What I would like people to discuss is the relationship between civilization and our outlook on the universe, which is a relationship to which no one pays any attention at present. The time in which we are living requires us to understand the importance of developing an outlook on the universe, for the prevalent idea nowadays is that humanity will continue to progress in a satisfactory manner with no need for any outlook or theory about the universe."

> "But in fact all human progress is dependent upon progress in the human outlook on the universe. By the same token we find that every case of disintegration (of a society or civilization) is caused by a similar disintegration in the human outlook on the universe. The reason why we need a real civilization is connected to the reason why we need to have an outlook on the universe."

> "When we manage to form a strong and valuable outlook on the universe, in which we can find a strong and valuable belief, only then will we be able to create a new civilization."

Then he said:

> "Civilization simply means doing our utmost as human beings to perfect humankind and achieve progress, of whatever kind, within the circumstances of the world in which we live. This rational thinking requires two things: firstly we must be ready to work hard in this life and in this world, and secondly we must be ethical. We will never be able to do this unless we are able to give true meaning to this world and this life."

Then he speaks of how they have lost every kind of outlook on the universe, after which he asks: "How have we ended up in this situation where we are lacking an outlook on the universe?"

To which he answers:

> "The reason is that the ethical, life-affirming outlook on the universe (in our civilization) had no basis in rational thought. For a long time we thought that we had found this basis, but it lost its impact without us even realizing until, a generation or more ago, we found ourselves forced to admit a total lack of any outlook on the universe!"

Finally he said,

> "The future of civilization depends on our overcoming the loss of meaning and the despair that have become distinguishing features of people's thoughts and beliefs nowadays, and on our reaching a position of fresh hope and strong determination. We will not be able to do that unless the majority of people discover for themselves deeply-rooted ethical principles that will affirm this world and this life, through a convincing outlook on the universe that is based on sound, rational thinking. Without this spiritual experience there is no way that we can keep our world from the collapse towards which it is headed."

What type of belief is the philosopher-doctor speaking about? What kind of outlook on the universe was he "prophesying"? The man was describing this outlook and setting guidelines for it, and his description of the coming collapse due to lack of faith of that nature is sufficient for us... After that we may point to our Islamic belief and the reader may study the description thereof given in the (author's) introduction to this book, where it is summed up in a few words. He may also read the reasons which truly qualify the Muslims to play this hoped-for role.

— 3 —

In the first chapter — following the idea discussed above — Professor as-Sibā'ie (may Allah have mercy on him) says:

"There are those among our people who do not think much of our civilization when compared with the marvellous achievements of this modern civilization, with its inventions and conquests in the field of modern science. Even if that is the case, it is not right to think little of our civilization because of the two reasons mentioned above. These two reasons are very subtle and very clear. In the first case, a distinction is made between the two components of civilization, the spiritual/ethical and the material. After noting this distinction, there can be no doubt that each subsequent civilization supercedes the one that came before it in terms of material advancement, but with regard to the spiritual and ethical components of a civilization which will be remembered forever and will play a role in bringing happiness to mankind, no civilization, before or since, can surpass Islamic civilization with regard to the development of these components."

The comment which may be made now about the fact that European civilization has surpassed Islamic civilization in terms of material progress is that the achievements of European man today are the result of all past civilizations put together, as some major Arab scholars have said, and that scientific progress increases every day; if every generation were to start from scratch, there would never be any progress. The contrast between the first printing press ever made and the printing presses we see nowadays is far greater than the contrast between handwriting and the first printing press.

This is what is produced by the efforts and intelligence of ten generations. If an ordinary man thinks that these huge machines that we see nowadays were created in one step, he would not be able to believe that.

In addition, no one can ignore the role played by Islamic civilization in the Middle Ages, and how much the Europeans benefited from its achievements, as our teacher says in the second chapter, and as we shall discuss later on. But the question that will arise sooner or later is that the time during which Islamic civilization prevailed lasted for longer than the period between the renaissance of European civilization and the present. If this empirical method was invented by Islamic civilization and inherited from Islam by Europe, why do we not find any trace of it in the Islamic world as we see it in the industrialized societies of Europe whose sons have walked on the moon and reached out as far as Mars? Where are the gas, steam, atoms and missiles in Islamic civilization?

The reason is not because of the Muslims' methodology, and it is not because the Muslims have no interest in discovering, inventing and making life materially easier for man. It is not

because of the nature of Islam or its beliefs, laws and way of life. Rather, the answer to this question is to be found in the fact that the Islamic world did not enjoy the right circumstances — internally or externally — to develop its science and knowledge as European civilization had. From the outset the Muslims began, in a manner unprecedented in history, to expand with the mission of liberating mankind from all forms of ignorance that had enslaved them, to such an extent that only a century after the death of the Prophet (ﷺ), the Muslim army had reached the valleys of France. [The Prophet (ﷺ) died in 632 CE and the battle of the Field of Martyrs at Poitiers took place in 732 CE.]

Then the Muslim world was forced to engage in a number of destructive wars; hardly had one finished but another began, so that their primary mission was simply to survive, before they could even think of developing their science and knowledge. Although wars and crises should not necessarily affect the work of writers and scientists, the wars that the Muslim world had to fight were not the types of wars known to Europe at the time of their scientific renaissance, because Europe did not have to fight the Mongols and Tartars, for whom victory was measured by the amount of destruction they could wreak, the number of atrocities they could commit, the number of books they could burn, and the number of colleges and schools they could destroy! At the end of the fourth century AH, scientific progress in the Islamic world had reached its peak — as is explained by Professor Adam Mitz in his book *The Age of the Renaissance in Islam* — and in the following century the Islamic world had to contend with the destruction of the Crusades which lasted for two centuries and from which Europe benefited — as we shall discuss below — and as Professor as-Sibā'ie pointed out. The Muslims were finally victorious in those wars, but victory made them over-confident in ways which

were ultimately harmful in the extreme at the time when the European world was reawakening.

Then came the fall of Baghdad at the hands of Hulagu in the middle of the seventh century AH.

What we may note about the wars of the Tartars and Mongols is that the Islamic world took the blows, thus protecting Europe at that time.

This is one reason. There are also many other reasons, including economic and geographical reasons, the movement of European explorers, and the tipping of the balance in favour of Europe. There is no room here to discuss these issues, and it is sufficient to mention them, whilst affirming — briefly — the religious motives behind geographical exploration, which indicates the roles played by external factors in giving a push to western civilization which could only, as is well known, proceed through colonialism which the Muslim world had never seen before. Earnest Parker, professor of political science at the Cambridge University, wrote an important chapter on the Crusades and their ultimate effect of tipping the balance, in which he said:

> "Thus we can see that all hopes in this project — which was aimed at converting the Mongols to Christianity in one go, thus uniting a Christian Asia with a Christian Europe in order to crush Islam so that it would become a minor doctrine that was confined only to parts of Spain and some corners of the Mediterranean — faded away. In 1316 CE, the Mongol khans (chiefs) in Persia embraced Islam. In the mid fourteenth century Islam spread widely in Central Asia. Between 1368 and 1370 the Chinese Ming dynasty closed the doors of China to foreigners, thus blocking the way for Christendom and

paving the way for Islam which had reached a high position and had spread far and wide under the auspices of the Ottoman Turks. But another hope rose in the minds of the west, and this new hope was enough to spark one of the most violent revolutions in history. The land route was now blocked, so why go by sea to the east in order to attack Islam and capture Constantinople from behind?"

Parker says:

"This was the idea of the great mariners who used to wear the cross on their chests and who sincerely believed that they were doing this in order to regain the Holy Land."

Then he says:

"If Columbus had been able to find the Caribbean Islands instead of Cathay, then we should truly be able to say that the Spanish who helped him had gained a new continent for Christendom and that the west had managed to tip the balance in its own favour in a manner that had never crossed anybody's mind..." and this is indeed what happened.

— 4 —

Whatever the case with regard to the material advantage, the ethical and spiritual element in civilization is the most important, or it is the real element when compared with the material element. The level that Islamic civilization reached in this regard, and the role that it could play once again in today's world, needs no explanation. In the chapters of this book — especially those that deal with human inclinations, racial equality, kindness to animals and our ethics in war — there is sufficient evidence.

But the reader may think that our teacher's emphasis on the ethical and spiritual element is a kind of consolation and contenting oneself with what Islamic belief has or what we are capable of despite western material advancement!

This is a strange way of thinking, and it is the last thing that may cross the mind of those who belong to western civilization, who have started to sense the signs of decline in their own civilization. The first thing that crosses the minds of Muslims who are still dazzled — because of their lack of sense and because they still have the potential to be colonized — is the material achievements of that civilization.

In this context — in addition to what our teacher as-Sibā'ie refers to and confirms — I would like once more to quote the subtle and eloquent words written by Aschfitzer about giving precedence to the spiritual element, not only because he belongs to western civilization, but also because in researching this topic he used principles and logic that are available to everyone.

Aschfitzer starts by saying:

"We could define civilization — generally speaking — by saying that it is 'The spiritual and material advancement of both individuals and societies.'"

Then he asks about the objectives of civilization, and answers that by saying that one of its objectives is to reduce the burden imposed on individuals and societies, the burdens of struggling to survive.

Aschfitzer says:

"The creation of opportunities for all in life as much as possible is something which must be sought for its own sake, and on the

other hand it is something that must be sought for the sake of achieving individual spiritual and ethical perfection. This is the ultimate goal of civilization."

Then he says:

"The struggle to survive is twofold. Man must prove himself when working with nature or against it, and when working with his fellow-humans or against them. Reducing this burden of struggle is achieved by strengthening the power of reason in controlling Nature and human nature, and by making reason serve the desired goals."

"Therefore, civilization has a dual nature: it may be achieved first by making reason prevail over the forces of nature, and secondly by making it control human urges and inclinations."

This analysis of the dual nature of civilization is precise and clear, but the important question which has to do with our topic is: which of these two types of progress is the true progress in terms of civilization? Aschfitzer responds by saying that it is the second type, even though it may be the least noticeable in our observations. He explains that by saying that the control of reason over nature does not imply pure progress, rather it means progress that has some bad aspects which may lead man in the direction of barbarism. Therefore, reason must also prevail over the urges and inclinations of human beings so that they will not use the power that they gain by control of natural forces against one another, "because that would put them in a situation where the struggle to survive would become more terrifying than it is among people who live a primitive life." So the claim to be civilized cannot be true unless the distinction between what is essential to civilization and what is not is clearly made.

However, we could count these two types of progress as a spiritual action, in the sense that they are both motivated by spiritual activity in man. But we may also count man's control of natural forces as materialistic progress, because we are controlling material things thereby and using them in the interests of man. But when reason prevails over human urges and inclinations, this is a spiritual action in a different sense, in the sense that it is the action of the spiritual on the spiritual, or in other words it is part of our power of reasoning being used to control another part of our power of reasoning.

Finally, what is the point of reason controlling human urges and inclinations, this control which represents true civilized progress, or represents true civilization? Aschfitzer says:

"The point is that individuals and societies alike concentrate their will on achieving material and spiritual progress for all and for the individuals who make up the society. I mean that all their deeds are ethical. So ethical progress is the true essence of civilization and it has no other meaning. As for material progress, it is less important and it may have good or bad effects on the development of civilization."

— 5 —

Now at last we come to the second chapter: the lasting impact of our civilization on history.

This chapter discusses the lasting effects that our civilization had in five main fields, namely: religion and belief; philosophy and science; language and literature; legislation; and, finally, the concept of the state and the relationship between government and

people. Perhaps this sequence of listing these fields was chosen by our teacher, especially since we may note that most attention is paid to this chapter to discussion of the effects of Islamic civilization on Europe or on the European renaissance. The reason for this influence is that the stage of history that followed the flourishing of Islamic civilization was the history of modern and contemporary Europe.

There has been a great deal of study — through quotes and statistics — and many books have been written, but this topic is still open to further research. But it seems that instead of adding further comments to this topic, it would be better to discuss with readers the principles on which these studies are based, regardless of the topics covered. This includes exploring the points of contact between Islamic civilization and western societies during the Middle Ages. In this context, it is important to explore these contact points with the necessary care and focus.

1. The earliest of these points of contact and of transfer of influence was the Crusades which lasted for two centuries, from 490 AH (1097 CE) until the last Crusader fortress fell into the hands of the Mamluks in 1291 CE. The Crusaders established kingdoms and statelets along the coast of Palestine and Greater Syria, and even inland, such as Armenia, ar-Raha, Antioch, Tripoli and Jerusalem. The Crusaders were first and foremost fighters, indeed they were promiscuous and barbaric warriors as the great British historian Edward Gibbon described them, but this did not prevent them from being influenced by Islamic Arabic civilization, especially in the fields of military arts, architecture, agriculture, manufacturing and social life. They were inspired by the development and advancement in various fields that they saw in the Islamic world, which was something that was not expected by either their leaders or common folk. At the same time, the

Muslims did not expect to find them as they did, especially in the fields of ethics and medical knowledge (which become clearly manifest at times of war). In the book of the Syrian prince and knight Usamah ibn Munqid, al-I'tibār, there is a great deal of evidence to support what we are saying. Hence it was very common for the Crusaders to imitate the Muslims — and not the other way round, as happened during the modern wars of colonialism because of the different circumstances — to such an extent that some classes of Crusaders made their wives and their daughters, when they reached the age of adolescence, veil their faces and would not let them go out to the marketplaces with their hair uncovered; indeed they would not let them go out unless it was for a necessary purpose, such as going to church or to the public baths. The Crusader men also let their beards grow, in imitation of the easterners, and they used slippers like those that the Muslims wore in their houses.

In general, the Crusaders brought back some of the habits and customs of the east. Their contact with the Muslims — as some researchers have said — caused the power of the Church to weaken and created a new focus in Europe. It also dealt a severe blow to the feudal system. Our only concern here is to point to where the Europeans' contact with the Muslims in the latter's homelands began, and to note that this contact lasted for almost two hundred years.

— 6 —

2. The second point of contact was Sicily and southern Italy. The Muslims (Banu al-Aghlab from Tunis) crossed from North Africa to the island of Sicily which was then, in 212AH (827 CE), under

the Byzantine Empire. They took over Palermo in 831 CE and Messina in 842 CE. Finally they took control of the entire island with the surrender of Syracuse in 878 CE. They continued to rule the island, despite some attacks from without, until they were divided by tribal differences, which enabled the Normans, under the leadership of Roger son of Tancred, who had crossed the Strait of Messina in 1060 CE, to take over Palermo in 1072 CE, at the end of a lengthy campaign. He was subsequently able to end the Muslim rule of the island when he took over Noto in 1092 CE (484 AH). This Roger I died in 1101 CE.

Islamic civilization flourished on this island as it did in Andalusia. Cultural exchanges between Muslims and Europeans reached a high level during Islamic rule and even after that rule came to an end. This exchange reached its peak — strange as that may seem to some — during the reign of Frederick II (1194-1250 CE), who was very fond of the sciences that had been developed by the Muslims, and appreciated their value. The "Sicilian letters" that were exchanged between him and Ibn Sab'īn are the best proof of that. Indeed it was also reported that he knew Arabic and would address his guests in that language. And it was said that he was one of the most outstanding men of his time in knowledge, wisdom and politics. There were strong ties between North Africa, Sicily and Salerno in those days.

He may also have had access to all the books of Ibn Rushd (Averroes), only twenty-five years after the latter's death, as he called together major translators, among the most prominent of whom was Michel Scott (1235), and organized works of translation. The Emperor (Frederick II) was keen to distribute his translations to the universities of Europe because of his great desire to spread knowledge and compete with the pope, as it appears to be the case.

This ambition of Frederick II seems to have been a continuation of the ambition of King Roger II before him, who was not only content[6] to let the Muslims remain in Sicily more than half a century after the conquest in order to benefit from their knowledge and civilization, rather he even asked ash-Sharīf al-Idrīsi, the author of *Nuzhat al-Mushtāq fi Ikhtirāq al-Afāq*, to come to him and write for him something about the shape of the world. When ash-Sharīf al-Idrīsi came to him, he honoured him and showed him a great deal of respect... Then he asked him to stay with him and write this book for him directly, as opposed to sending him a copy written out by a scribe. Ash-Sharīf al-Idrīsi agreed to his request. He used to come to him riding on his mule, and when he reached him, Frederick would make room for him to sit with him on his throne, but ash-Sharīf al-Idrīsi would refuse, then they would sit down together elsewhere.

After that, ash-Sharīf al-Idrīsi did a great deal of research, then he wrote his book *Nuzhat al-Mushtāq*, which was completed in 548 AH. The Russian Orientalist — or Arabist — Ignatius Kratchovsky commented on this work in his book *The History of Arabic Geographical Literature*:

> "Roger lived on the dividing line that separated the two global civilizations of that age, i.e., Islamic and European

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[6] The Italian historian Aldomili says: "But if the reign of the Muslims was characterized by tolerance to a large extent, as was usual, the reign of the Normans was no less tolerant than that, contrary to the usual state of affairs in Christendom. These kings, during whose reign many of the local people under their rule continued to adhere to Islam, were great protectors of science, especially Roger II." Then he says: "This favourable state of affairs which allowed civilization to flourish at its peak continued under the reign of the great king and emperor Frederick II." *Al-'Ilm 'inda al-'Arab wa Atharuhu fi Taṭawwur al-'Ilm al-'Ālami*, p. 144.

civilizations, although to call what the Europeans had at that time a civilization is somewhat questionable![7] So he had a sound knowledge of both civilizations. The fact that he appointed an Arab scholar to produce a description of the then known world clearly indicates that Arab civilization was superior at that time and that everyone acknowledged this superiority. The Norman court in Sicily was half eastern, if not more than half."

Professor K. Young says of Sicily:

"Sicily was a meeting place between the Greek, Latin and Berber Arabic languages and cultures, that led to the emergence of a different culture which — because of the support of Roger II and Frederick II — played a major role in transmitting the best of Islamic civilization to Europe via Italy. In the thirteenth century Palermo became like Toledo had been in the twelfth century, a great centre for translation of Arabic books into Latin."

3. The third and most important point of contact, after the Crusades and before Palermo, was Andalusia or Muslim Spain.

If we look at the immense cultural influence which Andalusia had on Christian Europe, we will notice the following points:

A - This influence had no connection, at any point, to the military or political situation. The truth is, as some historians have suggested, that Islamic Andalusia, even when it was in a state of decline, had a great effect on Christian Spain, and the change of the balance of power in favour of the Christian kingdoms in Spain and Portugal did not stop them from benefitting from the culture

[7] This idea is repeated several times throughout Kratchovsky's book.

of the Muslim Andalusians or from playing a role in transmitting those elements to different parts of Europe.

Indeed, this change in the balance of power — as we have noted — gave the opportunity of greater benefit and greater influence. Hence we see that the city of Toledo was indisputably the greatest centre of learning, from which Islamic culture and "Arabic science" was transmitted — as Aldomili believes — to the west, because it was the first Andalusian city to fall into the hands of Alfonso VI — the king of Castile — in 477 AH (1085 CE). This city did not lose its Arab or Islamic character when it fell, because the movement of scientific revival began in the court of Alfonso VI himself, and continued during the reign of Alfonso VII. The court of these kings was a centre of learning in which Muslim, Christian and Jewish scholars came together; the efforts of these scholars were focused on translating works from Arabic — the language of Islamic culture, knowledge and civilization — into Castilian Spanish first, then into Latin, before Castilian Spanish became a scientific language that could be used to transfer scientific ideas in the same manner as Latin, which had not disappeared from Toledo even before it fell into the hands of the Christians and despite the use of Arabic "in official matters and on the lips of scholars," as Aldomili says.

It may be said that Toledo was the greatest centre of translation in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, especially at the end of the thirteenth century when the throne of Spain passed to Alfonso X, who was known as "the Scholar" or "the Wise" (1284). He wanted Castilian to become a world language to take the place of Latin; he organized works of translation and appointed revisers and checkers to supervise each group involved in this work. Indeed, this translation work attracted other

European scholars such as the Italian Jirar al-Carioni who went to Toledo and took a special interest in scientific books, translating books on medicine, astronomy, chemistry and mathematics. There was also Jandsaleenus whose interest lay in the philosophical aspects and in summarizing some of the Arabic books in this field. We should not forget either the translations which were completed in Toledo in the twelfth century, which were undertaken near where Ibn Rushd was and at the time when he was writing his commentaries and books in Seville and Cordoba. We may add to that the school which was established in Toledo to teach Arabic and Hebrew, one graduate of which was the Dominican Ramon Martin (13th century) who was in contact with Thomas Aquinas.

Undoubtedly the fact that Toledo remained like this for three centuries — before the Muslims left Granada, their last stronghold in the Iberian Peninsula — played a decisive role in the transmission of Islamic knowledge and science, first to the Spanish and then to other Europeans, because at this time Toledo was also a focal point to which researchers and students came from all over Europe. Thence Islamic knowledge was transmitted to America too, because the Spanish later discovered the "new" continent in 1492, which was also the year in which the Muslims were expelled from Granada! In our view this is not one of those weird coincidences of history, as some researchers say, rather it was one of the subtle consequences of the conflicts of religion and civilization, because the two Catholic monarchs — Ferdinand and Isabella, the rulers of Aragon and Castile — at whose hands the last Islamic fortress had fallen and who were extremely proud of their great historical victory, were the only ones who had agreed to help Christopher Columbus when all the other kings of Europe had ignored him; they decided to attempt to surround the Muslim world in an audacious adventure — which we will discuss

elsewhere. This is also proven by something else without which we cannot explain the huge interest in translation, which is that shortly after that translation movement, in 1316, Ramon Raul established a chair for the study of foreign languages in the European University. This Ramon Raul was the first European — after the failure of the Crusades — to advocate the sending of missionaries instead of launching Crusades.

We will not list here the other Islamic centres in Europe which were cut off by the wars which the Spanish call the "Reconquista", which remained centres of light in Europe — for example, the kingdom of Aragon seized control of Saragossa (Zaragoza) in 1118 CE — but it will suffice us to note that the fact that Islamic civilization in the "reconquered" land was not destroyed was not necessarily because of the benefits of culture and knowledge, but also because it was essential to pay attention to this civilization and understand it in the long and bitter conflict that continued between them and the Muslims in other parts of the Iberian Peninsula.

B - In addition to that, this cultural influence did not end with the fall of the last Islamic fortress in the Iberian Peninsula; rather it continued for more than two more centuries because of the huge numbers of Muslims who remained in the land despite the persecution and burnings inflicted upon them by the Catholic Church. The reason for that — according to some historians — is the fact that the Muslim people were the ones who were doing most of the work in Spain, in agriculture, industry and commerce, which prompted many of the Christian nobles and feudal lords to try hard to keep their Muslim underlings, and to abolish the many laws which had been issued ordering the expulsion of the Muslims from Spain, or at least to delay implementation of those

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laws — especially after the elimination of the Muslim wise men and scholars.

The fact of the matter is that these Muslims, who are known to history as the Moriscos[8] or Mudejares[9], were saved from execution and from the courts of the Inquisition, because they made an outward display of having become Christian, giving in to the reality of their situation. But this outward display — ﴿...except him who is forced thereto and whose heart is at rest with Faith.﴾ *(Qur'an 16: 106)* — and giving in to reality did not save them from the worst kinds of persecution, which was so bad that it was said that there is no nation and no people on earth that has suffered and been tested like the Moriscos!

Whatever the case, they were immersed in Spanish language and culture, even though their real allegiance was to their Islamic religion and customs. They played their part — perhaps at the popular level this time — in the transmission of many of the fruits of their heritage to Spanish and European thought. The discovery of Morisco literature — written in Spanish but using Arabic letters — is one of the most important events in the history of Spanish literature in the nineteenth century... As some Arab researchers said, this was,

> "A new link in the strong chain that connects Arab thought on the one hand, and Spanish and European thought on the other. It becomes even more important when it is seen as representing the last link at the time when European civilization was starting to reach maturity and perfection."

[8] Moriscos or "Christian Moors": Muslims in Spain who were forcibly baptized.

[9] Mudejares: Muslims in Spain who made pacts with Christians; Muslims who remained in Spain and worked for Christian nobles on their large country estates.

In these Moriscos we do not only see a kind of patience and jihad, but also a kind of hope and confidence in the victory of Islamic civilization and culture over the fanatical Spanish. Hence, even though there is no documentary proof of the extent of their influence on Spanish culture, we may assume that their influence was substantial even if we do not assume that it was greater than before, because they contributed — or tried to contribute — to Spanish culture at that time, after experiencing the utmost violence and bitterness, the closest example of Islamic culture and thought. Hence their situation, it would seem, was not unknown to the Catholic Church which did not accept their outward Christianization, and so the decision was taken to expel them for once and for all in 1605 and 1614. In the latter year — or in 1612 — approximately six hundred thousand were expelled. Most of them went to Morocco where they spread out in the countryside and established the cities of Tetouan, Rabat, Salé and part of Fez. Many of them went and settled in Tlemcen, Algiers and Tunis, and others travelled to the east (Egypt and Syria).

The interference of the Ottoman Sultan at that time — Sultan Ahmad — played a role in saving some of these Muslims, and others had also been saved at an earlier time.

C - Therefore, we can clearly see that the influence of Islamic civilization and culture on European countries continued for approximately nine centuries. Even though this influence was subject to the laws of time and tide, and varied according to political and military circumstances, it remained active throughout those centuries. This evidence is more than sufficient to prove that which all Muslim and European scholars and historians are agreed upon.

We may add to that the fact that the greatest and most important influence occurred in Andalusia — in Toledo and all the cities of Andalusia; second to that is the influence that occurred in Palermo and Sicily; and finally the influence on the Crusades. The Italian scholar Aldomili wrote of the transmission of knowledge in the Iberian Peninsula and said:

> "As for the Iberian Peninsula, the movement to transmit Arabic knowledge to the Christian world penetrated deeper and was stronger and lasted longer than anywhere else, as there the developments which occurred were essential for the revival of knowledge in Europe."

Many European researchers have compared the influence of these three points of contact. Most of them reach the same conclusion as Aldomili, although Hans Protz, the author of *The Cultural History of the Crusades*, attributes the development of Europe between 1100 and 1300 to the Crusades alone. This development paved the way for the Renaissance, the age of geographical exploration and the Reformation. But these wars should be regarded, as Earnest Parker, Professor Emeritus of political science at Cambridge University and author of an important chapter on the Crusades, says, as one of a number of elements that contributed to this development. Although this view may be closer to the truth, it may be the case that the Crusades were no more than a wake-up call, and we may emphasize the importance of the influence of events in Sicily and southern Spain.

CHAPTER ONE

The Unique Characteristics of Our Civilization

Some of those who have written about the history of civilization define civilization as "a social system which helps man to increase his cultural output." Civilization consists of four main elements: economical resources, political systems, moral traditions and science and arts. The development and progress of a civilization requires many factors such as geographical and economic factors, and psychological factors such as religion, language and education. The collapse of a civilization stems from factors which are the opposite of those which lead to its rise and development; the most important of these destructive factors include moral and intellectual decadence, lawlessness and breakdown of social systems, the spread of oppression and poverty, the spread of pessimism and apathy and the lack of competent and sincere leaders. The story of civilization began when man first appeared, and it is a long chain which one civilized nation passes on to those who come after it. Civilization is not unique to any one land or race, rather it stems from the factors we have mentioned above. There is hardly any nation that has not written some of the pages of the history of civilization, but the thing that distinguishes one civilization from another is the strength of the foundation on which it is built, the great influence that it may have, and the benefits that humanity may enjoy as a result of its rise. The more universal a civilization is in its message, the more humane it is in its inclination, the more moral it

is in its direction and the more realistic it is in its principles, the more lasting will be its impact on history, the longer it will endure and the more it will deserve to be honoured.

Our civilization is a link in the chain of human civilizations; some civilizations came before it and others will follow. There were factors that contributed to the rise of our civilization, and there are reasons for its decline, but this is not the topic under discussion here. Rather, before we examine the wonders of this civilization, we should discuss the serious role that it played in the history of human progress, and how much it contributed to the fields of belief, science, ethics, rule, art and literature, and how it had a lasting impact on humanity of all peoples and in all places.

The most important thing that attracts the attention of the one who studies our civilization is that it is distinguished by the following features:

1. It is based on a foundation of absolute oneness in belief. It was the first civilization that proclaimed the message of One God Who has no partner or associate in His rule and dominion; He is the Only One Who is worshipped and He is the Only One Who is sought.

﴿إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ ۝٥﴾ [سورة الفاتحة: ٥]

﴿You [Alone] we worship, and You [Alone] we ask for help [for each and everything].﴾ *(Qur'an 1: 5)*

He is the One Who honours and humiliates, Who gives and withholds, and there is nothing in the heavens or on earth that is not subject to His dominion and held in His grasp.

This sublime understanding of the concept of oneness has a great effect in raising the level of mankind and of liberating the

masses from the oppression of kings, nobles, powerful men and the clergy; in reforming the relationship between rulers and subjects; in guiding people to Allah Alone, Who is the Creator of the universe and the Lord of the worlds. This belief also had a great effect on Islamic civilization which is virtually unique among all civilizations before or since in that it is free from all forms of idolatry and of idolatrous literature and philosophy in its beliefs, rule, art, poetry and literature. This is the reason why Islamic civilization refrained from translating the Iliad and the best of idolatrous Greek literature. It is also the reason why Islamic civilization fell short in some of the arts of sculpture and image-making, despite its prominence in the arts of inscription, engraving and architectural adornment. Islam, which declared war on idolatry and its manifestations, did not permit any expressions or relics of idolatry from ancient times to exist in its civilization, such as statues of great men, righteous men, Prophets or conquerors. Statues are one of the most prominent features of ancient and modern civilizations, because none of them took belief in oneness to the extent that Islamic civilization did.

This belief in oneness has an impact on all the foundations and systems produced by our civilization. So there is unity in its message, unity in its legislation, unity in its general aims, unity in humanity in general, unity in the way of life and pattern of thinking. Researchers studying the Islamic arts have noticed a unity of style and taste in different kinds of art, so that a piece of Andalusian ivory, a piece of Egyptian textile, a piece of Syrian pottery and a piece of Iranian metalwork, despite the differences in their forms and ornamentation, all have the same style and character.

2. The second of the characteristics of our civilization is that it is human in its inclinations and objectives, universal in its ambition

and message.

The Qur'an declared the oneness of mankind despite the differences in their races, places of origin and abodes. Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلنَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَٰكُم مِّن ذَكَرٍ وَأُنثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَٰكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَآئِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوٓاْ ۚ إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِندَ ٱللَّهِ أَتْقَىٰكُمْ ...﴿١٣﴾﴾[سورة الحجرات: ١٣]

﴿O' mankind! We have created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another. Verily, the most honourable of you with Allah is that [believer] who has most *Taqwa* [i.e. he is one of the *Muttaqūn* (the pious)].﴾

(Qur'an 49: 13)

When the Qur'an declared this universal oneness of mankind with regard to truth, goodness and dignity, it made its civilization the factor that brought together all the brilliant minds of all nations and peoples over whom the banner of Islam flew. Hence, whilst every civilization may be able to boast of its brilliant sons of one nationality, only Islamic civilization can boast of the brilliant minds from all nations and peoples who built it. For Abu Ḥanīfah, Mālik, ash-Shāfi'i, Aḥmad, al-Khalīl, Sībawayh, al-Kindi, al-Ghazāli, al-Farābi, Ibn Rushd and their like were all of different origins but they were among the brilliant minds through whom Islamic civilization gave to humanity the marvelous intellectual products of sound human thought.

3. The third of the characteristics of our civilization is the way in which it gave prominence to moral principles in all its systems and fields of activity, and never abandoned these principles or used them as means of benefitting a state, a group or an individual. In

ruling, in science, in legislation, in war, in peace, in economy, in the family; it paid attention to these moral principles in legislation and in implementation of laws. In this field it reached a high level that has never been attained by any civilization before or since. The Islamic civilization left behind a legacy in that field which deserves to be admired for it alone, among all civilizations, guaranteed the happiness of man in the purest sense, not contaminated with any misery.

4. The fourth of these characteristics is that it believes in knowledge in the truest sense, based on belief in the purest principles. So it addressed the rational mind and the heart at the same time, it provoked emotions and thought at the same time. This is an advantage that has not been shared by any other civilization in history. The reason why this particular characteristic of our civilization is to be so admired is because it was able to establish a state system based on principles of truth and justice, based on religion and belief without religion becoming an obstacle to the development of the state and the progress of the civilization. Rather religion was one of the greatest factors in its development. From the mosques of Baghdad, Damascus, Cairo, Cordoba and Granada the rays of knowledge shone into all parts of the world. Islamic civilization is the only one in which religion was not separated from the state even though it was spared the misery that resulted from the mixing of the two as happened in Europe in the Middle Ages. The head of state was the *Khalīfah* (Caliph) and a leader of the believers (*Amīr al-Mu'minīn*), but he ruled in accordance with the truth, and legislation was left to those scholars who were specialized in that field. Each group of scholars had its field of specialization, and all of them were equal before the law. Superiority was determined by one's level of *taqwa* (piety) and service to people:

"By Allah, if Fāṭimah the daughter of Muhammad were to steal, Muhammad would certainly cut off her hand."[10]

"All of mankind are the family of Allah and the most beloved of them to Allah is the one who is most beneficial to his family."[11]

This is the religion on which our civilization is based; No special privileges and immunities are there for a chief (Caliph, President, Prime Minister), a clergyman, noble or rich...

﴿قُلْ إِنَّمَآ أَنَا۠ بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ ... ﴿١١٠﴾﴾ [سورة الكهف: ١١٠]

﴿Say [O' Muhammad]: 'I am only a man like you...'﴾

(Qur'an 18: 110)

5. The last of these unique characteristics of our civilization is this amazing religious tolerance which has never been seen in any other civilization that was based on religion. If a person does not believe in any religion or any god, it is not strange for him to regard all religions as being equal and to treat the followers of all religions fairly; but if a person follows a religion and believes that his religion is true and that his belief is the best of beliefs, then he wields the sword and conquers cities, taking power and sitting in the position of a judge, but his belief in his religion and his pride in his belief does not cause him to be unfair in his judgements or to deviate from the path of justice, or force people to follow his religion... it is strange to find such a man in history, so how about an entire civilization which is based on religion but was the most tolerant, just, compassionate and humane civilization known to history! This is how our civilization was, and we will mention

[10] Narrated by Bukhari and Muslim.

[11] Narrated by al-Bazzār.

dozens of examples later on. It is sufficient here to note that our civilization is unique in history because it was established by one religion but it was for all religions.

These are some of the unique features of our civilization when compared to the history of other civilizations. Hence, it was admired by the whole world and loved by free and intelligent people of all races and religions, at the time when it was strong and when it was ruling, directing, educating and teaching people. When it collapsed and was succeeded by another civilization, the way in which people looked at it changed. Some began to look down on it and others admired it. Some spoke of its virtues and some went to extremes in criticizing it. Thus, the views of western researchers differ concerning our civilization. They would not have done that were it not for the fact that they — the ones who set the standards and whose opinions are followed — are in a position of strength and are behind the steering wheel of civilization nowadays, whereas those who are being judged, along with their civilization, are in a position of weakness and are the ones whom the strong are planning to rob of their resources and to rule their country with avarice. Perhaps this is the attitude of the strong towards the weak, whom they despise and belittle. This is what the strong have always done throughout history, apart from us when we were strong, for we were fair towards people, strong and weak alike, and we acknowledged virtue in easterners and westerners alike. Our history of exemplary characteristics includes fairness in judgement, purity of intention and sincerity of conscience.

It is unfortunate that we did not really notice the bias of the strong against us, or their unfairness in judging our civilization. Many of them were either religious fanatics whose prejudice

blinded their eyes to the truth, or nationalist fanatics whose nationalistic pride made them refuse to attribute anything good to anyone who was not of their nation. But what is our excuse for being influenced by their view of our civilization? Why do some of our own people look down on a civilization to which the whole world bended the knee for many centuries?

Perhaps the excuse of those who belittle the worth of our civilization is that it is nothing when compared with the wonders, inventions and scientific marvels of modern civilization. Even if this is true, it does not justify looking down on our civilization for two reasons:

1. Every civilization consists of two elements: a spiritual and ethical element, and a material element.

With regard to the material element, undoubtedly each civilization supercedes those that came before. This is one of the laws that Allah has decreed for the development of life. It is nonsense to expect an earlier civilization to have reached the level of material development of a subsequent civilization; if that were acceptable, then it would be permissible for us to look down on all the civilizations that came before our own, because of the things that our civilization has invented and the means and manifestations of civilization that were not known to any of the earlier civilizations. So the material element of civilization can never be the basis for differentiating between them.

It is the spiritual and ethical element that makes civilizations endure and enables them to bring happiness to mankind and save mankind from fear and pain. Our civilization surpasses all previous and subsequent civilizations in this regard, and it reached a level that has never been matched in any age of history. This is enough to give our civilization a lasting impact.

The purpose of civilization is to enable man to reach the highest degree of happiness, and in this regard our civilization managed to do what no other civilization in the east or in the west managed to do.

2. Civilizations are not measured by materialistic standards or by quantities or areas, or by luxurious standards of living, food and clothing. Rather they are measured by the impact they have on human history. The same applies when we speak of battles and kingdoms; they are not measured by the size of the battlefield or the numbers of soldiers. The decisive battles of ancient times or of the Middle Ages cannot be compared to the battles of the Second World War, for although the numbers of soldiers and the means of fighting may appear insignificant, they are still regarded as important historical battles because of their far-reaching effects. The battle of Cannae in which the famous Carthaginian general Hannibal defeated the Romans is one of the battles that are still studied in the military colleges of Europe to this day. The battles of Khālid ibn al-Walīd in the conquest of Syria are still studied and admired by western military experts, and for us they are golden pages in the history of military conquest in our civilization. The fact that the battles of Cannae, Badr, al-Qādisiyah and Ḥiṭṭīn happened so long ago does not make people ignore that they were decisive historical battles.

* * *

I believe that I have made the point I wanted to concerning the study of our civilization, and if I have not covered this topic in the manner I wanted to, then at least in the following discussion I will give examples of the wonders of our civilization through which I

will prove the lasting effects of the civilization which this ummah built and which the Most Just of judges and the Most Truthful of speakers described as being ﴿the best of peoples ever raised up for mankind﴾ *(Qur'an 3: 110).*

CHAPTER TWO

The Impact of Our Civilization

In the previous chapter we spoke of the prominent features of our civilization and stated that the impact of a civilization is measured by the effect it has on the history of mankind in the intellectual, ethical, and material fields, and that our civilization played a major role in the history of human progress. It has had a great impact in the fields of religious belief, science, ruling, philosophy, art, literature, etc., and had a great impact on the subsequent achievements of modern civilization. So what were these effects and how important are they?

We can sum up the lasting legacy of our civilization under five main headings:

1. The field of religious belief

The principles of Islamic civilization had a great impact on the religious reform movements which appeared in Europe from the seventh century until the age of the modern Renaissance. For Islam, which proclaimed the oneness of God and declared Him to be the only Sovereign, far removed from having any physical attributes, doing any injustice or having any shortcomings, and which declared man to be independent in his worship, his relationship with God and his understanding of His laws, with no need for the mediation of any clergy, was a major factor in opening people's minds to these dazzling principles. At that time people were suffering from violent sectarian disputes and from

having to submit their thoughts, opinions, wealth and labour to the men of the clergy! So it was natural, when the Islamic conquests spread as far as they did to the east and the west, that the neighbouring nations would be influenced by Islam's principles of belief above all else.

This is what indeed did happen. In the seventh century CE there arose some westerners who denounced the worship of images; then came those who denounced the idea of having any intermediary between God and His worshippers, and who called for independent understanding of the Bible, far removed from the authority and supervision of the clergy. Many researchers have confirmed that in his Reformation movement, Luther was influenced by what he had read of the philosophy of the Arabs and Muslim scholars and their views on religion, doctrine and revelation. The European universities at his time still depended on the books of Muslim philosophers that had been translated into Latin long before. We can be certain that the movement to separate church and state, which was proclaimed during the French Revolution, stemmed from the violent intellectual movements which had dominated Europe for three centuries or more, and which were sparked by our civilization through the Crusades and Andalusia.

2. The field of philosophy and science including medicine, mathematics, chemistry, geography and astronomy

Europe was awakened by the voices of our scholars and philosophers who taught these sciences in the mosques of Seville, Cordoba, Granada and elsewhere. The first westerners to come to our schools were very impressed and excited by all that they heard of these sciences in an atmosphere of freedom, the like of which

was unknown in their own countries. At the time when our scholars were speaking in their study circles and books of the rotation of the earth, its spherical shape, and the movements of the stars and heavenly bodies, the minds of Europeans were filled with myths and stories about all these matters! Then the Europeans started to translate works from Arabic to Latin, and the books of our scholars were studied in the western universities. Ibn Sina's (Avicenna) book on medicine, *al-Qānūn*, was translated in the twelfth century, and ar-Razi's (Rhases or Rhazes) book *al-Ḥāwi* — which was larger and more comprehensive than *al-Qānūn* — was translated at the end of the thirteenth century. These two books remained the basis for the teaching of medicine in the universities of Europe until the sixteenth century, but the books of philosophy continued to be the main reference for much longer. And the west only knew of Greek philosophy via our writers and translators.

Hence many fair-minded Europeans acknowledge that during the Middle Ages, we were the teachers of Europe for no less than six hundred years. The scholar Gustave LeBon says:

> "The translations of the books of the Arabs, especially scientific books, remained virtually the only source of teaching in the universities of Europe for five or six centuries. We can say that the influence of the Arabs on some sciences such as medicine has lasted to this day. For the book of Ibn Sina was still being expounded in Montpellier at the end of the last century."

This scholar also says:

> "Roger Bacon, Leonard Albeezi, Arnaud Filfofi, Ramon Raul, Saint Thomas, Albertus Magnus and the Spaniard Alfonso the Tenth all relied solely on the books of the Arabs."

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This scholar also says:

> "Roger Bacon, Leonard Albeezi, Arnaud Filfofi, Ramon Raul, Saint Thomas, Albertus Magnus and the Spaniard Alfonso the Tenth all relied solely on the books of the Arabs."

Monsieur Renan says:

> "Albertus Magnus was indebted to Ibn Sina; Saint Thomas was indebted to the philosophy of Ibn Rushd (Averroes)."

The orientalist scholar Sideo says:

> "The Arabs alone carried the banner of civilization in the Middle Ages and they defeated the barbarism of Europe which had been shaken by the incursions of the northern tribes. The Arabs drank from the enduring spring of Greek philosophy and, not content with what they had discovered of the Greek legacy, went on to expand it and add new topics to the study of nature."

He also said,

> "When the Arabs practiced astronomy they paid a great deal of attention to all the mathematical sciences, and so they became proficient masters and were truly our teachers in this field."

And he said:

> "When we study what the Latins took from the Arabs in the beginning, we find that Gerbert, who became pope and took the name Sylvester II, introduced to us between the years 970 and 980 what he had learned of mathematics in Andalusia; Athelhard the Englishman travelled in Andalusia and Egypt from 1100 to 1128, and translated the Elements of Euclid from Arabic, a work which had been unknown in the west; Plato of Tivoli translated from Arabic the Spherics of Theodosius; Rudolf al-Birooji translated from Arabic *The Geography of the Known World* by Ptolemy; Leonard al-Beezi wrote around 1200 essays on Algebra, which he had learned from the Arabs; Kanianus an-Nabari translated from Arabic ten books of Euclid in the thirteenth century, a good translation with commentary; Pole Witelo (Vitellius) translated *al-Baṣariyāt* by al-Ḥasan ibn al-Haytham (Alhazen) in the same century; Gerhard of Cremona spread knowledge of sound and correct astronomy in the same century with his translation of *Almagest* by Ptolemy and the commentary by Jabir (Geber), etc. In 1250 CE the Spaniard Alfonso ordered the publication of the astronomical tables that bear his name. Roger I encouraged the acquisition of Arabic science in Sicily, especially the books of *al-Idrīsi*, and the emperor Frederick II was no less keen to encourage study of the science and literature of the Arabs. The sons of Ibn Rushd lived in the court of this emperor and taught him the history of plants and animals."

Homeld says in his book on the universe:

> "It was the Arabs who for the first time invented the method of chemical preparation of medicines, and it was from this source that sound advice and the procedure of experiments came to us, which were taken up by the School of Saliram and from there after a long time spread to southern Europe. The medicine and the natural elements on which medication entirely depends became the cause of study of plants' Chemistry. In this way both these studies went on simultaneously in two different ways and thus the door on a new era of the study of this science was opened by the Arabs. Suffice it for the proof of the vast Arab knowledge of the plant kingdom that they made addition of two thousand herbs to those of Zulefuredas. There were many herbs in their pharmacy that the Greeks had not even dreamt of."

Sideo says of ar-Rāzi and Ibn Sina that through their books they dominated the schools of the west for a long time. Ibn Sina

was known in Europe as a doctor, and he held absolute sway over their schools for approximately six centuries. His book *al-Qānūn*, which includes five sections, was translated and printed a number of times, because it formed the basis for study in the universities of France and Italy.

3. The field of language and literature

The westerners, especially the poets of Spain, were greatly influenced by Arabic literature. The literature of chivalry, knighthood, metaphor and marvellous imaginary tales entered western literature through Arabic literature in Andalusia in particular. The famous Spanish writer Abaniz said:

> "Europe knew nothing of chivalry and its literature before the Arabs came to Andalusia and their knights and heroes spread throughout the regions of the south."

The extent to which western writers were influenced by Arabic and its literature is proven to us by what Dozy quoted in his book on Islam of the words of the Spanish writer Algharo, who deeply regretted the neglect of Latin and Greek and the acceptance of the language of the Muslims. He said,

> "The intelligent and eloquent people are bewitched by the sound of Arabic and they look down on Latin. They have started to write in the language of those who defeated them."

A contemporary of his who was more influenced by nationalistic feelings expressed his bitterness when he said:

> "My Christian brothers admire the poetry and stories of the Arabs, and they study the books written by the philosophers and scholars of the Muslims. They do not do that in order to refute them, but rather to learn the eloquent Arabic style.

> Where today — apart from the clergy — are those who read the religious commentaries on the Old and New Testaments? Where are those who read the Gospels and the words of the Prophets? Alas, the new generation of intelligent Christians do not know any literature and language well apart from Arabic literature and the Arabic language. They avidly read the books of the Arabs and amass huge libraries of these books at great expense; they look upon these Arabic treasures with great pride, at the time when they refrain from reading Christian books on the basis that they are not worth paying attention to. How unfortunate it is that the Christians have forgotten their language, and nowadays you cannot find among them one in a thousand who could write a letter to a friend in his own language. But with regard to the language of the Arabs, how many there are who express themselves fluently in it with the most eloquent style, and they write poetry that surpasses the poetry of the Arabs themselves in its eloquence and correct usage."

Among the brilliant writers of Europe in the fourteenth century and thereafter, there can be no doubt whatsoever concerning the influence of Arabic literature on their stories and writings. In 1349 Boccaccio wrote stories called *The Decameron* which is an imitation of the Arabian Nights (*Alf Laylah wa Laylah*), and from which Shakespeare took the idea for his play *All's well that ends well*, and the German playwright Lessing took the idea for his play *Nathan the Wise*.

Chaucer was the foremost English poet and the one who took the most from Boccaccio in his own lifetime. He had met him in Italy, after which he wrote his famous stories known as *The Canterbury Tales*.

With regard to Dante, many critics affirm that in *The Divine Comedy*, in which he describes his journey to the other world, he was influenced by *Risālat al-Ghufrān* by al-Ma'arri and *Wasf al-Jannah* by Ibn al-'Arabi. That was because he lived in Sicily at the time of the emperor Frederick II, who was fond of Islamic culture and of studying it from its Arabic sources. There were debates between him and Dante concerning the views of Aristotle, some of which were only known through Arabic sources. Dante also knew a considerable amount about the biography of the Prophet (ﷺ), of which he had read the story of the *Isra'* and *Mi'rāj*, and the description of heaven.

Petrarch lived during the time of Arabic culture in Italy and France, and he studied at the universities of Montpellier and Paris, both of which based their syllabus on the books of the Arabs and their students in the universities of Andalusia.

The development of the European story was influenced by the storytelling arts of the Arabs in the Middle Ages, which were the *maqāmāt* (a genre of Arabic rhythmic prose) and tales of chivalry and knightly adventure for the sake of glory and love. After the Arabian Nights was translated into European languages in the twelfth century, it had a great impact in this field. From that time until the present it has been published in more than three hundred editions in all the languages of Europe. A number of European critics think that Swifts' *Gulliver's Travels* and Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* are indebted to the Arabian Nights and the letter of Hayy ibn Yaqdhān to the Arab philosopher Ibn Ṭufayl.

No one can doubt that this huge number of editions of the Arabian Nights is indicative of westerners' love for this book and therefore of its influence on them.

There is no need for us to mention the Arabic words, having to do with various aspects of life, that have entered different European languages but which still are pronounced much as in Arabic, such as cotton, damask silk, musk, syrup, jar, lemon, zero, and countless others.

It is sufficient for us here to note the words of Professor Mikhael:

> "Europe is indebted, in its storytelling literature, to the Arab lands and to the Arab peoples living in the Syrian plateau. It is indebted, for the greater part or primarily, to those active forces which made the Middle Ages in Europe different in spirit and imagination."

4. The field of legislation

The contact of European students with the Islamic schools in Andalusia and elsewhere had a great impact in transmitting a number of legislative and juristic rulings into their languages. At that time Europe had no proper system and no just laws until, during Napoleon's time in Egypt, the most famous books of Māliki Fiqh were translated into French. Foremost among these books was *Kitāb Khalīl* (the book of Khalīl), which formed the core of French civil law, which to a large extent was similar to the rulings of Māliki fiqh. The scholar Sideo said:

> "The Māliki *madhhab* is the one which attracts our attention, especially because of its connection to the Arabs of Africa. The French government delegated Dr. Beron to translate into French the book called *al-Mukhtaṣar fil-Fiqh* by al-Khalīl ibn Isḥāq ibn Ya'qūb (d. 1422 CE)."

5. The concept of the state and the relationship between the people and the government

In the ancient and mediaeval worlds, the people's right to supervise the actions of their rulers was denied, and the relationship between the people and their ruler was that of slave and master. The ruler was the absolute master who did whatever he wanted with the people, and the kingdom was regarded as the personal property of the king, to be inherited from him like the rest of his wealth. Because of that, they regarded it as permissible to wage war against another state to demand a princess' right to the throne or because of a dispute concerning a son-in-law's inheritance.

As for the relationship between warring countries, it was usually one of violating the sanctity of everything owned by the defeated party, his wealth, honour, freedom and dignity. This is how things remained until the emergence of Islamic civilization which proclaimed as one of its basic principles that the people had the right to supervise the activities of their rulers, and that these rulers were no more than hired workers who were expected to work hard in taking care of the people's interests with honesty and integrity. Hence for the first time in history, an individual from among the people was able to call his ruler to account for what he was wearing and ask where he had got it from, and no one ruled that he should be executed or imprisoned or banished from the land, rather the ruler came and explained himself until that man and the people were convinced! And for the first time in history, one of the people said to the supreme ruler: "Peace be upon you, O' hired worker!" and the ruler acknowledged that he was the hired worker of the people and that he shared the hired worker's duties of sincere service and fulfilling the trust. This was one of

the things that the Islamic civilization proclaimed and implemented. It was like a breeze of freedom and awareness blowing among the peoples neighbouring the Islamic civilization. They began to complain, then to stir, then they revolted and liberated themselves. This is what happened in Europe, for the westerners came to the land of Syria during the Crusades and they had previously seen in the lands of the Andalusian caliphate that the people kept a watchful eye on their rulers, and that the rulers were not under the supervision of anyone except their own people. The kings of Europe compared the Arab and Muslim kings who were not subject to the influence of any particular class but rather the whole people, with their own submission to the authority in Rome and the ever-present threat of ex-communication unless they showed obedience to the religious king of Rome (i.e., the pope). After their return to their own countries, they rebelled until they freed themselves, then their own peoples rebelled against them until they freed themselves. After that, the French Revolution did not take matters any further than the freedoms that our civilization had proclaimed twelve centuries earlier!

Among the principles that our civilization followed in its wars were: respecting treaties, respecting freedom of belief, leaving places of worship to their people, guaranteeing the freedom and dignity of people. This generated a spirit of pride and dignity in the conquered peoples, and awoke in them a sense of their own worth.

For the first time in history, a father among the conquered people complained to the supreme ruler of the state that the son of the governor had hit his young son twice with a whip on the head for no reason. The supreme ruler of the state got angry and called the governor to account. He passed judgement that the injured

party be given the right to retaliate, and he rebuked the governor saying, "When did you enslave the people who were born free?" This was a new spirit which was awoken by our civilization among individuals and peoples. Before our rule and our civilization, a father who complained about his son being hit had been humiliated and beaten, his wealth had been confiscated and he had been persecuted for his beliefs, so he could not have revolted or expressed his pain, or felt any sense of pride and dignity, until the sun of our civilization rose on him, and then he could raise his voice and say to the ruler of the believers (*Amīr al-Mu'minīn*): "I seek refuge in Allah and in you from oppression." The oppression of which he was complaining was not the shedding of blood or the violation of honour; it was not religious persecution or the confiscation of land; rather it was two blows of one small child against another!

The westerners made contact with our civilization in the Middle Ages in Syria and in Andalusia, before which they had never known of a king revolting against a pope, or the uprising of a people against a king. They never thought that they had the right to call a ruler to account or to support one who was oppressed. When one of them differed with another concerning some matter of doctrine or sect, they would slaughter one another like a butcher slaughters sheep! But when they made contact with us, their renaissance and revolution began, then they freed themselves. After this, can anyone deny the effect of our civilization in freeing the world and saving people?

* * *

These are some of the lasting effects of our civilization in five important fields that are among the most prominent features of life among nations and civilizations. For this reason the peoples who were liberated by our civilization are indebted to us and we have to realize that, not because of false pride or wishful thinking, but so that we may know who we are and appreciate the value of our civilization and heritage, and realize that we deserve to be the just (and the best) nation, witnesses over mankind, leading them to goodness, truth and dignity.

* * *

CHAPTER THREE

Our Humane Tendency

The researcher who studies our civilization and its impact cannot help but notice the humane tendency which distinguishes our civilization from all others. For it brought mankind from an atmosphere of rancour, hatred, division and prejudice into an atmosphere of love, tolerance, cooperation and equality before Allah and before the law. It created a society in which all were equal and there was no room for one race or group to claim superiority over another. This humane tendency is manifested in the principles and laws of our civilization, and in its day-to-day life.

The humane tendency in its principles can be seen in the fact that Islam declares all people to have been created from a single soul.

﴿۞ يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلنَّاسُ ٱتَّقُواْ رَبَّكُمُ ٱلَّذِى خَلَقَكُم مِّن نَّفْسٍ وَٰحِدَةٍ وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيرًا وَنِسَآءً ... ﴿١﴾﴾ [سورة النِّساء: ١]

﴿O' mankind! Be dutiful to your Lord, Who created you from a single person [Adam], and from him [Adam] He created his wife [Hawwa (Eve)], and from them both He created many men and women...﴾ *(Qur'an 4: 1)*

The human origin of all of mankind is one and the same. No matter how much they split up after that into nations, tribes, countries and races, that is simply like the division of one family, like the sons and daughters from one father and one mother. This

being the case, the differences in race and country of origin should lead to their cooperating and getting to know one another in good ways. Hence there emerges the eternal human principle:

﴿يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلنَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَٰكُم مِّن ذَكَرٍ وَأُنثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَٰكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَآئِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوٓاْ ... ﴿١٣﴾﴾ [سورة الحُجرَات: ١٣]

﴿O' mankind! We have created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another...﴾ *(Qur'an 49: 13)*

Some individuals may be raised high in this life and others brought low; some groups may be rich and many may be poor; some may rule and some people may be subjugated; some people may have white skins while other nations have black skins.

This is the way of the world, indeed it is a system that never changes. But that does not mean that those who are in higher positions should discriminate against those who are beneath them, or that those who are rich should discriminate against those who are poor, or that rulers should discriminate against their subjects, or that those with white skins should discriminate against those with black skins. Rather all are equal. They are all equal before Allah in their humanity and none of them are distinguished except in terms of piety (*taqwa*):

﴿... إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِندَ ٱللَّهِ أَتْقَىٰكُمْ ... ﴿١٣﴾﴾ [سورة الحُجرَات: ١٣]

﴿... Verily, the most honourable of you with Allah is that [believer] who has most *Taqwa* [i.e. he is one of the *Muttaqūn* (the pious)]...﴾ *(Qur'an 49: 13)*

They are also equal before the law, to which they must submit equally; no distinctions are made except on the basis of truth.

﴿فَمَن يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ خَيْرًا يَرَهُۥ ﴿٧﴾ وَمَن يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ شَرًّا يَرَهُۥ ﴿٨﴾﴾ [سورة الزّلزَلة: ٧-٨]

﴿So whosoever does an atom's weight of good shall see it. And whosoever does an atom's weight of evil shall see it.﴾ *(Qur'an 99: 7-8)*

They are equal within the framework of society, so that the strong may be influenced by the weak, and all of them may be influenced by the actions of a few.

"The likeness of the believers in their mutual love and compassion is that of a single body. If one part of it suffers, the rest of the body will join it in fever and staying awake."[12]

Hence, Islam continued to proclaim the unity of mankind, like siblings from one father and mother. Social unity in the community is like a tree, all of whose branches bend in the wind, with no difference between the upper branches and lower branches. It is useful here to note that the Qur'an frequently addresses mankind in words that make them feel that they have a common human origin: "O' mankind..." "O' sons of Adam..." And it addresses the followers of the single religion by saying, "O' believers...", without addressing its words to any nation or group to the exclusion of another.

With regard to the humane tendency in the laws of our civilization, you can see that clearly in any aspect of its legislation. In the prayer, the people stand together before Allah, without allocating any special place to a king, great man or scholar. In fasting, all the people feel the same hunger, with no

[12] Hadith, narrated by Muslim and Aḥmad.

favours shown to a ruler, rich man or noble. In Hajj all people wear the same clothes, they stand in one place and they do the same rituals. No distinction is made between one who has come from afar and one who lives locally, between one who is strong and one who is weak, between the nobility and the common folk. If we move from that to the issue of civil law, we see that truth is the foundation of the laws that regulate the relationships between people, and that justice is the purpose behind legislation, and that warding off wrong is the banner which is carried by the law so that everyone who is persecuted and oppressed will come to it. Moving on to the area of criminal law, we note that the punishment is the same no matter who has committed the crime. Whoever murders is to be killed, whoever steals is to be punished, whoever transgresses is to be disciplined. It makes no difference whether the murderer is knowledgeable or ignorant, whether the victim was a prince or a peasant. It makes no difference whether the transgressor was the ruler of the believers or a weaver of cloth, or the one whose rights were transgressed was a non-Arab or an Arab, an easterner or a westerner. All of them are equal before the law.

﴿يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ كُتِبَ عَلَيۡكُمُ ٱلۡقِصَاصُ فِي ٱلۡقَتۡلَىۖ ٱلۡحُرُّ بِٱلۡحُرِّ وَٱلۡعَبۡدُ بِٱلۡعَبۡدِ وَٱلۡأُنثَىٰ بِٱلۡأُنثَىٰۚ ... ﴿١٧٨﴾﴾ [سورة البقرة: ١٧٨]

﴿O' you who believe! *al-Qiṣāṣ* [the Law of Equality in punishment] is prescribed for you in case of murder: the free for the free, the slave for the slave, and the female for the female...﴾ *(Qur'an 2: 178)*

The shari'ah (Islamic Law) attained an even higher level than this when it affirmed the human dignity of all people, regardless of their religion, race or colour. Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿... وَلَقَدۡ كَرَّمۡنَا بَنِيٓ ءَادَمَ وَحَمَلۡنَٰهُمۡ فِي ٱلۡبَرِّ ... ﴿٧٠﴾﴾ [سورة الإسرَاء: ٧٠]

﴿And indeed We have honoured the Children of Adam and carried them on the land...﴾ *(Qur'an 17: 70)*

This dignity is what guarantees the rights of all people to life, to freedom of belief, to an education. This is for all people, and one of the duties of the state is to guarantee those rights to all people on an equal footing without any exceptions. But shari'ah goes even further than that, to the sublime and humane level that determines reward and punishment for people, not on the basis of their outward deeds, but on the basis of their intentions.

> "Allah does not look at your outward appearance, rather, He looks at your hearts."[13]

It is the intention for which one will be rewarded or punished:

> "Actions are but by intention and each person shall have but that which he intended."[14]

The intention which is acceptable to Allah (ﷻ) is the good intention which seeks to benefit people and to please Allah, with no materialistic purpose or hope of benefit in trade.

﴿... وَٱعۡبُدُواْ رَبَّكُمۡ وَٱفۡعَلُواْ ٱلۡخَيۡرَ لَعَلَّكُمۡ تُفۡلِحُونَ ﴿٧٧﴾﴾ [سورة الحَجّ: ٧٧]

﴿... And worship your Lord and do good that you may be successful.﴾ *(Qur'an 22: 77)*

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[13] Hadith narrated by Muslim.

[14] Narrated by all the leading scholars of hadith.

If you do a good deed for the sake of Allah, you cannot expect any favour in return from the person to whom you did that good deed.

﴿وَيُطْعِمُونَ ٱلطَّعَامَ عَلَىٰ حُبِّهِۦ مِسْكِينًا وَيَتِيمًا وَأَسِيرًا ﴿٨﴾ إِنَّمَا نُطْعِمُكُمْ لِوَجْهِ ٱللَّهِ لَا نُرِيدُ مِنكُمْ جَزَآءً وَلَا شُكُورًا ﴿٩﴾﴾ [سورة الإنسان: ٨-٩]

﴿And they give food, in spite of their love for it [or for the love of Him], to the *Miskīn* [the poor], the orphan, and the captive, [saying]: 'We feed you seeking Allah's Countenance only. We wish for no reward, nor thanks from you.'﴾ *(Qur'an 76: 8-9)*

And shari'ah reached the pinnacle of humane tendencies when it declared the oneness of all worlds, human, animal, plant, inanimate, earth and stars in their enslavement to Allah and their submission to the natural laws of the universe. How marvellous are the words which the Qur'an requires the Muslim to recite in every *rak'ah* (unit of prayer) of his prayer:

﴿ٱلْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ ٱلْعَٰلَمِينَ ﴿٢﴾ ٱلرَّحْمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ ﴿٣﴾﴾ [سورة الفاتحة: ٢-٣]

﴿All the praises and thanks be to Allah, the Lord of the *'Ālamīn* [mankind, jinn and all that exists]. The Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.﴾ *(Qur'an 1: 2-3)*

It is essential for the Muslim to remember that he is a part of the universe which is the creation of One God to Whom is ascribed the attribute of ultimate and comprehensive mercy. So the Muslim who lives in this world and is in need of his Lord should be an example of that mercy which is an attribute of Allah Who has no need of the worlds.

This is the manifestation of the humane tendency in the principles and legislation of our civilization, when it was proclaimed to mankind. But what really happened when it ruled and conquered peoples? Did these principles remain as a charter, like the modern Charter of Human Rights, the anniversary of whose declaration is celebrated by various countries each year, whilst it is violated by the major states every hour of every day of every month of the year? Did these principles remain confined to the land in which they were first proclaimed, as the principles of the French Revolution remained confined to France and were withheld from its colonies and the countries which fell under its rule or mandate? Were new statues set up, like the Statue of Liberty in New York, which is the first thing seen by those who come to that city, whilst the actions of America overseas speak for themselves, cursing and making a mockery of freedom, and persecuting those who love freedom? Let us listen to history, for it is the most truthful of witnesses. Let us listen to the wonders of the humane tendency of our civilization and how it is manifested in the behaviour of individuals and rulers.

Abu Dharr, who was an Arab from Ghifār, had an argument with Bilāl, who was a black man from Ethiopia, the freed slave of Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with them all). Abu Dharr and Bilāl were Companions of the Prophet (ﷺ), people who believed in Islam and its Messenger.

"The argument escalated until Abu Dharr was beside himself with anger, and he said to Bilāl, 'O' son of a black woman!' Bilāl complained to the Prophet, who said to Abu Dharr: 'Are you insulting his mother? You are a man in whom there is ignorance (*jāhiliyah*)!' Abu Dharr said that he thought that *jāhiliyah* meant sexual and

moral deviance which only young men commit, and wondered how he could have done such a thing now, at his age... The Prophet said: 'Yes, they (black people) are your brothers.'"[15]

Abu Dharr repented and regretted what he had done, so much that he told Bilāl to step on his face, expressing the great extent of his repentance and regret.

A woman from the tribe of Makhzūm committed theft at the time of the Prophet (ﷺ), and she was brought to him to be punished. This upset Quraysh and they said, "Who will intercede for us with the Messenger of Allah so that she may be spared the punishment?" Then they remembered that Usāmah ibn Zayd was dearly beloved by the Messenger, so they spoke to him and asked him to intercede for that woman. So Usāmah spoke to him and the Prophet became very angry and said to him:

"Are you interceding concerning one of the *hadd* punishments decreed by Allah?!" Then he stood up and addressed the people, saying: "Those who came before you were only destroyed because if a nobleman among them stole, they would let him off, but if one of the weak stole, they would carry out the punishment on him. By Allah, if Fāṭimah the daughter of Muhammad were to steal, I would cut off her hand."[16]

Qays ibn Mutātiyah (who was a hypocrite) came to a circle in which Salmān al-Fārisi (the Persian), Ṣuhayb ar-Rūmi (the Roman) and Bilāl al-Ḥabashi (the Ethiopian) were sitting, and said: "Al-Aws and al-Khazraj (two Arab tribes of Madīnah) have

[15] Narrated by Bukhari, Muslim, and others.

[16] Narrated by Bukhari, Muslim and Aḥmad.

undertaken to support this man [meaning Muhammad (ﷺ)], so what are these people doing here? (meaning Salmān, Suhayb and Bilāl)." Mu'ādh ibn Jabal stood up and grabbed him by the collar, then he went to the Prophet and told him what he had said. The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) stood up angrily and hurried, dragging his lower garment, to the mosque. There he gave orders that the call "*aṣ-Ṣalātu Jāmi'ah*" should be given (a call for all the people to gather; also the call given to signal that 'Eid prayers are about to begin). He addressed the people, saying,

"O' people, the Lord is one, the father (Adam) is one and the religion is one."[17]

'Adiyy ibn Ḥātim aṭ-Ṭā'i came to Madīnah one day, when he had not yet become Muslim, and he attended a gathering in which the Messenger (ﷺ) was sitting with his Companions around him; they had just come back from a military campaign and were still wearing their armour. He was astonished by the respect which the *Ṣaḥābah* were showing to their Prophet, and whilst they were like that a poor woman, one of the slave-women of Madīnah, came to the Prophet (ﷺ) and said to him, "O' Messenger of Allah, I need to speak with you privately about something." He said to her,

"Wait for me anywhere in the streets of Madīnah and I will speak privately with you." Then he got up and went and stood for a long time, listening to her. Then he came back, and when 'Adiyy saw that, he was very moved by this humane attitude on the part of the Messenger of Allah, so he became Muslim.

[17] Narrated by Ibn 'Asākir with an isnad going back to az-Zuhri. The rest of the hadith says: "The Arabness of any one of you does not come from his father or his mother, rather it is the language; whoever speaks Arabic is an Arab."

When the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) conquered Makkah, after a struggle that had lasted for twenty-one years, and he gained victory over those who had fought against him, expelled him and rejected him, he did not remember anything that day except his call and its principles, which he had been proclaiming when he was keeping a low profile in the alleyways of Makkah, and when he was ruling in Madīnah and laying the foundations of the Islamic civilization. On that day he announced the implementation of those principles which he had been proclaiming for so long, before he achieved his final victory. Standing at the door of the Ka'bah, with Quraysh, who had been so proud and had been ruled by an oppressive class system, listening to him, he said:

"O' Quraysh, Allah has taken away the pride of the *jāhiliyah* with its boasting of forefathers. The people come from Adam, and Adam was created from dust." Then he recited the words of Allah which affirm the principle which he had proclaimed even before his victory over Quraysh:

﴿يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلنَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقۡنَٰكُم مِّن ذَكَرٖ وَأُنثَىٰ وَجَعَلۡنَٰكُمۡ شُعُوبٗا وَقَبَآئِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوٓاْۚ إِنَّ أَكۡرَمَكُمۡ عِندَ ٱللَّهِ أَتۡقَىٰكُمۡۚ ...﴿١٣﴾﴾[سورة الحُجرَات: ١٣]

﴿O' mankind! We have created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another. Verily, the most honourable of you with Allah is that [believer] who has *at-Taqwa* [i.e. he is one of the *Muttaqūn* (the pious)]...﴾ *(Qur'an 49: 13)*

When Abu Bakr (رضي الله عنه) was the Caliph, he was the model of a modest leader whose heart and soul were filled with humane tendencies. When he was the Caliph he would come to the girls of the city who had lost their fathers in war and would milk their sheep for them. He used to say,

"I hope that being caliph will not change me and stop me from doing the things I used to do before."

'Umar (رضي الله عنه) was the model of a Caliph who feels protective jealousy for his people, who is kind to the weak and strong in defending the truth. All the people were equal before him, and he even used to deny himself in order to give to the people and go hungry so that they could eat their fill. He used to check on the people in their homes, and there are many well-known stories of this.

One day he saw an old man in the marketplace, asking for charity. He asked him, "What is the matter with you, old man?" The man said, "I am an old man who is asking for help in paying the *jizyah* (tribute) and in spending on my own livelihood." He was one of the Jews who lived in Madīnah. The great and humane 'Umar said to him: "We have not been fair to you, old man. We took the *jizyah* from you when you were young, then we neglected you when you grew old." Then he took him by the hand and led him to his house, where he gave him the food that he had. Then he sent word to the keeper of the *Bayt al-māl* (treasury of the Islamic state), saying to him: "Give a allowance to this man and others like him, so that he and his children will be independent."

One day 'Umar was walking in the streets of Madīnah, when he saw a young girl stumbling and falling as she tried to walk. 'Umar said, "What a poor girl! Do any of you know who she is?" His son 'Abdullāh said to him, "Do you not know her, O' *Amīr al-Mu'minīn*?" 'Umar said, "No." 'Abdullāh said, "She is one of your grand-daughters!" 'Umar said, "Which one?" 'Abdullāh said, "This is So and so the daughter of 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar (i.e., his own daughter)." 'Umar said, "Woe to you! What has made her

like this?" His son said to him: "What you have withheld of the things that are with you." 'Umar said, "You have no rights over me except your share, like other Muslims, whether that is enough or not. Let us refer to the Qur'an to judge between me and you."

A caravan of traders came to Madīnah, among which there were women and children. 'Umar said to 'Abdur-Raḥmān ibn 'Awf: "Can you guard them tonight?" So the two of them stood guard and prayed as much (of *nafl* prayers) as Allah decreed that they should pray. Then 'Umar heard a child crying, so he went to him and said to his mother, "Fear Allah and take care of your child!" Then he went back to his place, and he heard the child crying again, so he went back to the mother and said, "Fear Allah and take care of your child!" Then he went back to his place. At the end of the night, he heard the child crying so he went to the mother and said, "Woe to you! I see that you are a bad mother! Why is it that your child did not settle down all night?" Not knowing that he was the Caliph she said to him, "O' slave of Allah, I got fed up with you this night! I am trying to wean him but he refuses." He asked, "Why (do you want to wean him)?" She said, "Because 'Umar does not give a allowance to a child until he is weaned (i.e., he does not give the parents a allowance for their children until they are weaned)." 'Umar asked, "How old is he?" She said, "Such and such a number of months." He said, "Woe to you, do not be in a hurry." Then he prayed *Fajr* (dawn prayer), and the people could hardly hear his recitation because he was weeping so much. When he said the *salām* (at the end of the prayer) he said, "Woe to 'Umar, how many children of the Muslims he has killed!" Then he issued orders that a caller should tell them, "Do not hasten the weaning of your children, for we will give a stipend to every child born in Islam." And he also sent word of that to the regions of the Islamic empire.

Indeed, history has never told of anything more marvellous than this incident. There is no civilization that has equalled the marvel of 'Umar in his democracy, when he undertook himself to stay up at night and guard the caravan whilst its people were sleeping, at the time when he was the Caliph, the one who had defeated Chosroes and Caesar, and inherited their kingdoms. He did what no one would do today except a guard who was commanded to guard something like this caravan and who would never do anything like 'Umar did, taking notice of a crying child and telling his mother to take care of him three times. Who among us would do what 'Umar did for the children of the caravan? Who among the leaders of history can match 'Umar in his humane feelings?

Let us listen to an even more marvellous story from the history of our civilization. Aslam the servant of 'Umar narrated:

"I went out with 'Umar one night, and we went far from Madīnah, checking on the people who lived outside the city. We saw a fire from afar, and 'Umar said, 'I see over there some travellers who have stopped to rest because night has come and it is cold. Let's go!' So we set off running until we reached them, and we saw a woman with two small children and a huge pot on the fire. Her two children were crying and yelling. 'Umar greeted her with *salām* then asked her, 'What is the matter?' She said, 'We have stopped to rest because night has come and it is cold.' 'Umar asked, 'What is the matter with these two children? Why are they crying and yelling?' She said, 'Because of hunger.' He asked, 'What is in this pot?' She said, 'Water, to keep them quiet until they fall asleep... and Allah will judge between us and 'Umar!' (i.e., she was complaining about 'Umar and praying against him). He said, 'May Allah have mercy on you, how should 'Umar know

like this?" His son said to him: "What you have withheld of the things that are with you." 'Umar said, "You have no rights over me except your share, like other Muslims, whether that is enough or not. Let us refer to the Qur'an to judge between me and you."

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about you?' She said, 'How come he is in charge of us but he knows nothing about us?' 'Umar turned to me and said, 'Let's go!' So we set off running until we came to the place where flour was stored. He took out a sack of flour and some butter, then he said, 'Lift it up onto me.' I said, 'I will carry it for you.' He said, 'Will you carry my burden of sin on the Day of Resurrection?!' So I lifted it up onto him, and we set off running again. He put those things down next to her, then he took out some of the flour and said, 'Make the dough and I will bake it for you.' He started blowing the fire beneath the pot. He had a huge beard and I could see the smoke coming out through his beard. He cooked that food for them, then he lifted the pot down and said, 'Get me something.' She brought a plate and he put food on the plate and said to her, 'Feed it to them, and I will spread it out for them (i.e., so that the food will cool down).' He kept on doing that until they had eaten their fill, and he left the left-overs with her. He stood up, and I stood up with him, and she started saying, 'May Allah reward you with good, you deserve to be the Caliph rather than *Amīr al-Mu'minīn* (i.e., 'Umar)!' He said, 'Say something good; when you come to *Amīr al-Mu'minīn* you will find me with him *in sha' Allah*.' He walked away from her, then he turned back and stood watching her. I said to him, 'Do you have something else to do?' But he did not speak to me, until he saw the children lie down, then they fell asleep and settled down. Then he stood up, praising Allah, and turned to me and said, 'O' Aslam, hunger kept them awake and made them cry, and I did not want to go away until I saw what I have seen.'"

Another story that demonstrates this unique humane pattern in the history of mankind is something else that happened to 'Umar one night when he was following his usual habit of checking on the people. One night he passed through one of the

quarters of Madīnah and he saw a tent from which could be heard the groans of a woman in pain, and there was a man sitting at the door of the tent. 'Umar greeted him with *salām* and asked who he was; he replied that he was a Bedouin who had come in hopes of getting something from the bounty of the Caliph. 'Umar said, "What is this noise that I hear from inside the tent?" The man said, not knowing that he was speaking to 'Umar, *Amīr al-Mu'minīn*, "Go away (may Allah have mercy on you) and mind your own business; do not ask about what doesn't concern you." But 'Umar insisted on asking until the man told him, "It is a woman in labour, and she has no one to help her." 'Umar went back to his house and told his wife Umm Kalthoom bint 'Ali (may Allah be pleased with her), "Do you want a reward for which Allah has just given you the opportunity?" She asked, "What is it?" He told her what was happening and told her to bring with her the clothes that a newborn baby would need, and what the woman would need, and to bring with her a pot containing grains and ghee. She brought those things; 'Umar carried the pot and she walked behind him until they came to the tent. He told his wife, "Go in to the woman." He sat down with the man and lit a fire, and cooked the food he had brought, and the man was sitting there, not knowing who he was. The woman gave birth, and the wife of 'Umar said from inside the tent: "O' *Amīr al-Mu'minīn*, tell your companion the good news that he has a son." When the Bedouin heard that he knew that he was with the Caliph, and he got nervous and started to move away, but 'Umar told him, "Stay where you are!" Then he brought the pot and told his wife to take it and feed the woman. When she had done that, he gave the pot to the man and told him, "Eat, woe to you, for you have stayed up all night!" Then his wife came out and he said to the man, "Tomorrow come to us and we will tell you something that is in

your best interests." The next day the man came to him and he gave him a stipend for his son.

In all that I have read about the great men of history I do not know of any incident more wonderful, more noble or more sublime than this. They say that one day Washington, the liberator of America, was walking through the streets of the city that bears his name, and he saw some soldiers trying to lift a rock but they could not do it. Their sergeant was standing and not even trying to help them, and Washington said to him, "Help them to lift it!" The sergeant refused and said, "I will not stoop to that level." Washington threw aside his cloak and helped them to lift the rock, then he said to them, "Whenever you need some help, ask for the house of Washington." This is something rare which is indicative of a great character. But what is this in comparison to what 'Umar did, when he gave up his sleep and rest at night and went to check on his people? When he heard of a pregnant woman in labour with no one to help her, he went back to his house and brought his wife in the depth of the night, with him carrying food and her carrying clothes, until they came to the tent and his wife — who in modern terms would be regarded as the "First Lady" of the state — played the role of a midwife, while he played the role of a cook. What an example of sublime humanity that has never been reached by any president on the face of the earth! This is one of the great deeds of 'Umar, and one of the wonders of our civilization which moulded 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (ﷺ), a son of the desert, into a human being who reached the pinnacle of greatness as our civilization reached the pinnacle of human civilization.

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'Umar is not the only one whom our civilization made into a man who represented the perfection of merciful humanity. Abu Bakr, 'Uthmān, 'Ali, 'Umar ibn 'Abdul-'Azīz, Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn (Saladin) (may Allah be pleased with them all) and other scholars, great men, leaders, devoted worshippers and philosophers of our civilization, all form enduring examples of the sublime humane characteristics of our enduring civilization.

CHAPTER FOUR

Racial Equality

This is another aspect of the human tendency in our enduring civilization, namely the affirmation of true equality between people regardless of their colour. After the Qur'an had declared the principle of equality in the verse,

﴿ ... إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِندَ ٱللَّهِ أَتْقَىٰكُمْ ... ﴿١٣﴾ ﴾ [سورة الحُجرَات: ١٣]

﴿Verily, the most honourable of you with Allah is that [believer] who has *at-Taqwa* [i.e. he is one of the *Muttaqūn* (the pious)].﴾ *(Qur'an 49: 13),*

— the Messenger (ﷺ) stood during his last Pilgrimage to proclaim during his Farewell Sermon,

> "People come from Adam and Adam came from dust. There is no superiority of an Arab over a non-Arab, or of a white person over a black, except in terms of piety (*taqwa*)."[18]

This equality did not stop at the level of principles which are announced on various occasions — as is done by the leaders of modern civilization today — rather it is an equality that was implemented as something ordinary that was not regarded as unusual at all, not something that would be made a show off in a self-conscious manner. It was manifested in the mosques where

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[18] Ibn Sa'd from Abu Hurayrah.

white and black would stand together in the same row, in submission to Allah and in humility before Him. A white man would not feel offended in any way to find a black man standing beside him. It was and is manifested during the Hajj when all the races of mankind, white and coloured alike, would meet in one place, wearing the same clothes, with no distinction between white and black and no feelings of superiority on the part of the whites towards the blacks. Indeed, we find an even more sublime example than that, when on the day of the conquest of Makkah, the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) commanded the Ethiopian Bilāl to climb up onto the Ka'bah to give the call to prayer from the top of the Ka'bah and to proclaim the words of truth. The Ka'bah was the sacred sanctuary of the Arabs during the *Jāhiliyah*, and it was the *qiblah* (direction of Ka'bah) which was venerated in Islam, so how could a coloured slave like Bilāl climb on top of it and step on it with his feet? Something like this could not be imagined in modern civilization, (in America for example), but our civilization did this fourteen centuries ago. Bilāl's climbing on top of the Ka'bah was no more than a declaration of human dignity above all else, and a statement that man deserved to be honoured in this way because of his knowledge, reason, morals and faith, not because of his white skin. For a man's white skin does not make him any better if his deeds are bad, and a man's black skin does not make him inferior if he is intelligent and strives hard.

Hence the Prophet (ﷺ) did not approve of Abu Dharr, who was one of the noblest of his Companions, when he slandered another and said to him, "O' son of a black woman!" He did not approve of that and he rebuked him, saying,

> "Are you insulting his mother? Verily you are a man in whom there is ignorance *(Jāhiliyah)*!"

This is the criterion that distinguishes between knowledge and ignorance in Islamic civilization, between humane civilization and the civilization of ignorance.

The civilization in which no race feels superior to another and no colour feels superior to another is the civilization which is established by dignified and wise men and in which mankind can find true happiness. The civilization in which whites feel superior and humiliate blacks, in which those with white skins are happy and coloured people are miserable, is a civilization of ignorance which puts mankind back hundreds of years to the ages of blindness, arrogance, ignorance and foolishness. 'You are a man in whom there is ignorance'... This is the description of the civilization of ignorance which proclaims racial discrimination. This is what our civilization fought against in all spheres of life, in the mosques, schools, courts and leadership, with friends and enemies alike.

When the Muslims came to conquer Egypt, they penetrated deeply into the country until they reached the fortress of Babylon. The ruler of Egypt, al-Muqawqis, wanted to negotiate with the Muslims, so he sent a delegation to them to find out what they wanted, then he asked them to send a delegation to him. 'Amr ibn al-'Aaṣ sent to them ten men, among whom was 'Ubādah ibn aṣ-Ṣāmit. 'Ubādah was very black and so tall that they said he was ten handspans tall. 'Amr issued instruction that he ('Ubādah) was the one who should do all the talking. When they came to al-Muqawqis, led by 'Ubādah, al-Muqawqis was scared of his blackness. He said to them, "Keep this black man away from me and let someone else speak to me." All the men of the delegation said, "This black man is the best among us in wisdom and knowledge; he is our leader and the best among us. We all refer to his opinion, and our leader (*Amīr*) has issued instructions to him

and not to us, and has commanded us not to go against what he says." Al-Muqawqis said to them, "How can you be pleased that this black man is the best among you; rather he should be the least among you!" They said, "Not at all! Even though he is black as you can see, he is one of the highest in position among us; he is one of the earliest Muslims, and one of the best in wisdom and knowledge. Blackness is not something that is despised among us." So al-Muqawqis said to 'Ubādah, "Come forward, O' black man, and speak to me kindly, for I am afraid of your blackness, and if you speak harshly you will make me even more afraid." 'Ubādah, who had seen that al-Muqawqis was afraid of his blackness, said: "Among our army there are a thousand black men who are even more black than I am."

Do you not see how wonderful, sublime and humane this civilization is? For all people — even the civilized people of the twentieth century — think that black people are inferior, and they do not think that black people are qualified to be among whites, so how could they defer to them, make them leaders or recognize that they may be superior in wisdom and knowledge? Our civilization came to destroy these standards and show these views to be foolish, to show that a black man may be superior to a white if his knowledge, wisdom and courage warrant that. 'Ubādah ibn aṣ-Ṣāmit was just one of these black men who were raised to positions of leadership by our civilization.

'Abdul-Malik ibn Marwān commanded a caller to proclaim during the Hajj that no one was to issue *fatwās* (religious rulings) to the people except 'Aṭā' ibn Abi Rabāḥ, the Imam of the people of Makkah and their scholar and *faqīh* (jurist). Do you know what this 'Aṭā' was like? He was black, one-eyed, flat-nosed, crippled, lame, kinky-haired, and no one would have thought much of him. When he sat in his study-circles among thousands of his students,

he looked like a black crow in a field of cotton! But our civilization made this flat-nosed, one-eyed black man an Imam to whom people referred to for *fatwās*, and a school at whose hands thousands of white people graduated and among whom he was honoured, loved and revered.

In our civilization there were respected figures in the fields of science and literature whose skins were black, but their blackness did not prevent them from being literati who were in the inner circle of the Caliphs, such as the poet Naṣīb, or *fuqaha'* who wrote the respected sources of Islamic fiqh (Jurisprudence), such as 'Uthmān ibn 'Ali az-Zayla'i, who wrote a commentary on *al-Kanz fil-Fiqh al-Ḥanafi*, and al-Ḥāfidh Jamāl ad-Dīn Abu Muhammad 'Abdullāh ibn Yūsuf az-Zayla'i (762 AH), the author of *Naṣb ar-Rāyah*. They were both black men from Zayla', in Ethiopia.

There is no Arab who is unaware of *Kāfūr al-Ikhshīdi*, the black slave who ruled Egypt in the fourth century AH, and who was immortalized by the poet al-Mutanabbi in verse which both praised and condemned him.

In brief this racial discrimination between white and black was unknown in our civilization. There were no places exclusively for blacks in which no white people lived, there was no persecution of blacks which made them objects of hatred and scorn for the whites. Rather, our humane civilization treated all people with truth and justice, and only looked at the whiteness or blackness of people's actions.

﴿فَمَن يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ خَيْرًا يَرَهُ ۝٧ وَمَن يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ شَرًّا يَرَهُ ۝٨﴾ [سورة الزلزلة: ٧-٨]

﴿So whosoever does good equal to the weight of an atom

shall see it. And whosoever does evil equal to the weight of an atom shall see it.﴾ *(Qur'an 99: 7-8)*

These ideas may have seemed strange fifty years ago, for it is plain to see that discriminating between whites and blacks is a barbaric action which no advanced civilization would resort to. Our civilization would never have done that, and it is the civilization which is most well known for spreading brotherhood and equality among people. But since the establishment of the United Nations and the proclamation of the Charter of Human Rights, we find that we need to speak about this matter, after having seen and heard of the disastrous events such as racial discrimination (apartheid) in South Africa, horrific crimes of colonialism in Kenya, and the situation of the blacks and coloureds in America. It is strange that the rulers in South Africa who promote racial discrimination, those who persecute the blacks politically and economically in Kenya and those who are inflicting the greatest suffering on the blacks in America are not easterners who could be accused of backwardness and barbarism, as westerners always accuse easterners. Rather, they are advanced nations, among the most prominent members of the United Nations. America is the greatest nation which dominates the United Nations; England is the greatest state in Europe and boasts of its democracy; South Africa is represented at the United Nations by a ruling class of white Europeans who have colonized that region and started to speak in its name. The countries of South America hold a high position and are listened to in the United Nations. These states are the ones which, in the twentieth century, have committed the most abhorrent crimes that mankind has ever seen in its history, the crime of one man persecuting his fellow-man, not because of his weakness or ignorance, but because of the colour of his skin!

The government of South Africa is still insisting, despite the objections voiced by the Asian-African lobby at the United Nations, on discriminating between whites and coloureds with regard to rights, obligations and privileges. England is still carrying out massacres in Kenya against the free natives of the Mau-Mau. Indeed, it is still insisting on implementing the Land Law of 1915, which gives to 29,000 Europeans rights to land in Kenya that are not granted to 4,550,000 Africans who are being persecuted in their own lands and in their workplaces and homes, even though they are the rightful owners of the land and its resources! Sir Elliot, the first governor-general of Kenya said in 1900, concerning his government's policy in Kenya that,

"Inside the protectorate (i.e., Kenya) was land for the white man, and that it was hypocritical not to admit that the interests of the whites should take priority; the basic goal of the policies that we follow and the laws that we set up should be to establish a white colony."

This policy has remained the goal of the European rulers of Kenya until the present,[19] so that the land will all belong to the white Europeans who can dispose of its resources however they wish.

One of the strange features of the Land Law in that country is that the governor is allowed to give land to whomever he wishes, and that land totaling no more than 5000 acres may be given for a nominal rent for a period of 999 years! In 1925 the average holding of a white colonialist was 500 acres, as opposed to 8 acres for a native. With regard to the policy of segregating the black

[19] This book was written in 1960s when S. Africa was under the rule of the whites.

natives from the white colonialists, this was done on the basis of designating specific areas for blacks, beyond which they were not permitted to venture. When the white colonialists wanted to employ black workers — because the wages were cheap — as soon as their work was done they were kicked off the white farms and sent to their huts and dwellings in the low-lying areas, far away from the homes of the whites.

If we move to America, we will discover something shocking and distressing, in the New World, where the Statue of Liberty in the harbour of New York greets everyone who comes to the city. Underneath the statue are written the words:

"Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, the wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me. I lift my lamp beside the golden door."

Yes indeed, in the land of freedom which set up its statue in its greatest harbour and sea-port, there unfolds the tragedy of persecution of the blacks, which is the worst crime that humanity has ever known in its history. We are not accusing people of something that is untrue, rather the people themselves admit it. James Bizenz, a member of the American Senate, said:

"The coloured man who desires equality has no business in the southern states, for this land belongs to the white man and it should remain like that."

The persecution of blacks in the U.S. manifests itself in a variety of ways in a number of fields.

In the field of education, in twenty states of the U.S., blacks are not allowed to study in the same schools as whites. Clause 207 of the constitution of the state of Mississippi says the following:

"It is essential in this field — the field of education — that white children be segregated from black children, so that each group will have its own schools."

The laws of the state of Florida dictate that the schoolbooks for black students be kept separately from the books for white children!

With regard to marriage, nearly all the states forbid the marriage of a white woman to a black man or of a white man to a black woman. The constitutions of some states, such as Mississippi, state that such marriages are null and void, and even that a marriage of a white person to someone who is one-eighth black is null and void!

With regard to work, the laws of some states dictate that black workers are not allowed to work with white workers in the same part of the factory, and that black people are not allowed to enter and exit through the same doors as whites!

In the field of social matters, the laws of fourteen states require segregation of white passengers from blacks on the railways, and require provision of separate compartments for blacks on trains and buses, separate telephone booths, and separate rooms in hospitals, even in mental hospitals where an insane white man must be segregated from an insane black man! Even stranger than that is the fact that the owner of a dogs' graveyard in Washington announced in 1947 that he would not accept the bodies of dogs that had belonged to black people. He explained that although he knew that the dogs would not be offended if they were all buried in the same graveyard, his white customers were offended by the humiliating treatment given to their pampered pets after they died — i.e., that they were being treated the same as the black people's dogs!

One of the excuses that the American politicians give for this shameful state of affairs is that hatred of the blacks is worse in the southern states, i.e., those which are less civilized than the northern states. But the facts prove that these excuses are untrue. In all the major northern cities you will find the vast majority of black inhabitants crowded in filthy quarters built of tumble-down wooden houses that are teeming with mice and rats, where every day fires break out. In one room in Harlem — the black district in New York — you will find nineteen black people living. One of the newspapers there said that if we were to take the population density of Harlem and apply it to the entire population of the United States, we would be able to put all of them in half of New York!

Within view of the White House in Washington, and in the shade of the beautiful Lincoln Memorial, there is an ugly quarter in which 250,000 blacks live, in other words a quarter of the population of the capital, living like animals in stables. In this capital they are forbidden to enter hotels, restaurants, theaters, schools, hospitals and even churches that are only for whites. A black man from the republic of Panama went into a Catholic church in Washington, and while he was absorbed in his prayers, one of the priests rushed up to him and handed him a piece of paper on which was written the address of a black Catholic church. When the priest was asked why he had done that, he said that in that city there were churches just for black Catholics in which this black man could stand before his Lord! This is despite the fact that they proclaim that the Messiah (peace be upon him) is for all of mankind.

Fifteen million blacks live with this humiliation and scorn, and in this atmosphere of sickness, poverty and misery.[20] *That is one-tenth of the population of the United States, which leads the United Nations and proclaims that its mission is to bring freedom and peace to the people of this world!*

We think it is appropriate, in this context, to quote what the American Harry Hayward wrote about the reality of this freedom, in his book *The Liberation of the Negroes:*

"There can be no doubt that race was not used in any country — with the exception of South Africa — as a means of enslaving a people as it has been used in this country. Slavery in the sense of slave-owning has come to an end, but it is still going on in the sense of the class system. The aim now is to keep the coloureds in a position inferior to that enjoyed by whites, and to try to reinforce that by various means, sometimes by issuing a sentence of execution, or by means of an execution carried out by the ignorant masses on a Negro, far removed from any judicial authority. Sometimes it is achieved

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[20] In a report published by the U.S. Education Department, Professor Brown studied the living conditions in black districts throughout the United States. He said: Paved roads, street lights, sanitation pipes and police protection usually end where the black quarter of the city begins. In many areas there is no hospital where a black man can knock at the door. As for medical and nursing services, they are usually inadequate or absent altogether. Look at these painful statistics on the level of health among blacks: In Chicago and New York, the rate of tuberculosis cases among black residents in 1947 was five times the rate among white inhabitants. In New York and New Jersey it was approximately seven times more. The death rate for new mothers among blacks was twice the rate among whites, and the death rate among black children was 70% greater than among white children. The average life expectancy of a black American is ten whole years lower than the average life expectancy of a white American.

through unfair legislation or by the unjust process of law, and sometimes through customs and traditions that have no foundation whatsoever."

The American economist Victor Berlo says:

"There can be no doubt that the industrialists of the north who controlled the federal government during the Civil War were not keen to free the Negro people in any proper sense. All they were trying to do was to take the place of the southern slave-owners in exploiting the Negro people as much as possible. The fact of the matter is that the political policy followed by the Republican Party and the army in the southern states was an alliance with the former slave-owners aimed at subjugating the Negroes all over again."

And he says:

"The poison of racism spread throughout the length and breadth of the country, and penetrated all walks of American life. The people became accustomed to using all sorts of phrases indicating scorn and disdain when referring to the Negro people and other racial minorities."

Jack Light and Lee Mortimer said:

"America is famous among the peoples of this world for having the Statue of Liberty as its symbol. What this means is that we should welcome everyone who comes to our land seeking protection, either fleeing from persecution or to escape oppression. But it seems that this meaning of freedom has completely vanished since this statue was erected on its foundation."

In 1946 in the city of Columbia, a Negro and his mother went to a repair shop to have a radio fixed. After paying the price demanded of them, they realized that the radio had not been fixed. The Negro mother said: "Thirteen dollars and the radio is still broken?!" The owner of the shop ordered that they should be thrown out, and one of the employees kicked the mother and she fell on her face. The Negro man got angry for his mother's sake and hit the one who had attacked her, throwing him to the ground. The neighbouring storekeeper shouted out, "Kill the son of a b——!" Crowds gathered around and started shouting, "Let's punish them!" Punishment of Negroes by Americans meant separating their heads from their bodies, with no trial or sentence by a court. In the end they were rescued from the mob and taken to prison, but the mob were not satisfied with that; they rushed to the black neighbourhood to wreak their vengeance on that Negro woman and her son. The police surrounded the unfortunate neighbourhood and the poor Negroes were chased from their homes and stores, which were looted and burned, and shots were fired at those unlucky people, resulting in a large number of deaths and injuries.

All of that happened because a black woman complained to a shopkeeper that she had paid for her radio to be fixed and had not gotten anything in return. This is an example of their civilization!

In 100 AH, in other words, thirteen hundred years ago, a black woman called Fartūnah complained to the Caliph 'Umar ibn 'Abdul-'Azīz that she had a low wall over which people could climb and steal her chickens. 'Umar immediately sent word to her telling her that he had sent word to the governor of Egypt to fix her wall and build up her house. He wrote to his governor in Egypt, Ayyūb ibn Sharḥabīl, telling him:

"Fartūnah, the freed slave of Dhi Aṣbaḥ, has written to me and told me that her wall is too low and that her chickens are being stolen, and asking me to build it up for her. When this letter of mine reaches you, go there yourself and build it up for her!"

When the letter reached him, he went to Giza himself and asked for Fartūnah, until he found where she lived, and saw that she was a poor black woman. He told her what the Caliph had written to him, and he built up her wall for her.

This is what we did thirteen hundred years ago. This is an example of our civilization.

* * *

CHAPTER FIVE

Religious Tolerance

This is a new aspect of the humane tendency in our enduring civilization, and it was something new in the history of beliefs and religions, and in the history of ancient civilizations that were produced by specific religions or specific nations. Islam produced a civilization that was not hostile towards previous religions and did not advocate blind following of opinions and views. Rather its motto was:

﴿... فَبَشِّرْ عِبَادِ ﴿١٧﴾ ٱلَّذِينَ يَسْتَمِعُونَ ٱلْقَوْلَ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ أَحْسَنَهُۥٓ ...﴿١٨﴾﴾

[سورة الزُّمَر: ١٧-١٨]

﴿... So announce the good news to My slaves — Those who listen to the Word and follow the best thereof...﴾

(Qur'an 39: 17-18)

Because of that, the principles of our civilization with regard to religious tolerance are as follows:

1. That the divinely-revealed religions[21] all stemmed from the same source:

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[21] The term 'divinely-revealed religions' is used for common understanding. In reality Allah revealed only one religion - Islam, at all times, Prophets Noah to Muhammad. The Qur'an is explicit about it. The Scriptures - Torah, Gospel and Psalm all bear the same message, submission to Allah - Islam. The various nomenclature like Hinduism, Christianity were evolved by the people at their own. (IIPH)

﴿شَرَعَ لَكُم مِّنَ ٱلدِّينِ مَا وَصَّىٰ بِهِۦ نُوحًا وَٱلَّذِىٓ أَوۡحَيۡنَآ إِلَيۡكَ وَمَا وَصَّيۡنَا بِهِۦٓ إِبۡرَٰهِيمَ وَمُوسَىٰ وَعِيسَىٰٓۖ أَنۡ أَقِيمُواْ ٱلدِّينَ وَلَا تَتَفَرَّقُواْ فِيهِۚ ...

﴿١٣﴾﴾ [سورة الشورىٰ: ١٣]

﴿He [Allah] has ordained for you the same religion [Islamic Monotheism] which He ordained for Nūḥ [Noah], and that which We have revealed to you [O' Muhammad], and that which We ordained for Ibrahīm [Abraham], Mūsa [Moses] and 'Eesa [Jesus] saying you should establish religion [i.e. to do what it orders you to do practically] and make no divisions in it [religion] [i.e. various sects in religion]...﴾ *(Qur'an 42: 13)*

2. That the Prophets are brothers and there is no difference between them with regard to the message; the Muslims are obliged to believe in them all:

﴿قُولُوٓاْ ءَامَنَّا بِٱللَّهِ وَمَآ أُنزِلَ إِلَيۡنَا وَمَآ أُنزِلَ إِلَىٰٓ إِبۡرَٰهِـۧمَ وَإِسۡمَٰعِيلَ وَإِسۡحَٰقَ وَيَعۡقُوبَ وَٱلۡأَسۡبَاطِ وَمَآ أُوتِيَ مُوسَىٰ وَعِيسَىٰ وَمَآ أُوتِيَ ٱلنَّبِيُّونَ مِن رَّبِّهِمۡ لَا نُفَرِّقُ بَيۡنَ أَحَدٖ مِّنۡهُمۡ وَنَحۡنُ لَهُۥ مُسۡلِمُونَ ﴿١٣٦﴾﴾

[سورة البَقَرَة: ١٣٦]

﴿Say [O' Muslims]: We believe in Allah and that which has been sent down to us and that which has been sent down to Ibrahīm [Abraham], Ismā'īl [Ishmael], Isḥāq [Isāc], Ya'qūb [Jacob], and to *al-Asbāṭ* [the offspring of the twelve sons of Ya'qūb], and that which has been given to Mūsa [Moses] and 'Eesa [Jesus], and that which has been given to the Prophets from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and we are Muslims in submission to Him.﴾ *(Qur'an 2: 136)*

3. Belief cannot be forced upon people, rather it must come by conviction and acceptance:

﴿لَآ إِكۡرَاهَ فِي ٱلدِّينِۖ ... ﴿٢٥٦﴾﴾ [سورة البَقَرَة: ٢٥٦]

﴿There is no compulsion in religion.﴾ *(Qur'an 2: 256)*

﴿وَلَوۡ شَآءَ رَبُّكَ لَأٓمَنَ مَن فِي ٱلۡأَرۡضِ كُلُّهُمۡ جَمِيعًاۚ أَفَأَنتَ تُكۡرِهُ ٱلنَّاسَ حَتَّىٰ يَكُونُواْ مُؤۡمِنِينَ ﴿٩٩﴾﴾

[سورة يُونس: ٩٩]

﴿And had your Lord willed, those on earth would have believed, all of them together. So, will you [O' Muhammad] then compel people in order that they become believers?﴾ *(Qur'an 10: 99)*

4. The places of worship belonging to the divinely-revealed religions are sacred and must be defended and guarded like the mosques of the Muslims:

﴿ ... وَلَوۡلَا دَفۡعُ ٱللَّهِ ٱلنَّاسَ بَعۡضَهُم بِبَعۡضٖ لَّهُدِّمَتۡ صَوَٰمِعُ وَبِيَعٞ وَصَلَوَٰتٞ وَمَسَٰجِدُ يُذۡكَرُ فِيهَا ٱسۡمُ ٱللَّهِ كَثِيرٗاۗ ... ﴿٤٠﴾﴾

[سورة الحَجّ: ٤٠]

﴿... For had it not been that Allah checks one set of people by means of another, monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques, wherein the Name of Allah is mentioned much would surely, have been pulled down...﴾

(Qur'an 22: 40)

5. Differences of religion should not make people fight one another or commit aggression against one another; rather they should cooperate in doing good and warding off evil:

﴿... وَتَعَاوَنُوا۟ عَلَى ٱلْبِرِّ وَٱلتَّقْوَىٰ ۖ وَلَا تَعَاوَنُوا۟ عَلَى ٱلْإِثْمِ وَٱلْعُدْوَٰنِ ۚ ... ﴿٢﴾﴾

[سورة المائدة: ٢]

﴿... Help you one another in *al-Birr* and *at-Taqwa* [virtue, righteousness and piety]; but do not help one another in sin and transgression...﴾ *(Qur'an 5: 2)*

With regard to the differences between them, Allah alone is the One Who will judge between them on the Day of Resurrection:

﴿وَقَالَتِ ٱلْيَهُودُ لَيْسَتِ ٱلنَّصَٰرَىٰ عَلَىٰ شَىْءٍ وَقَالَتِ ٱلنَّصَٰرَىٰ لَيْسَتِ ٱلْيَهُودُ عَلَىٰ شَىْءٍ وَهُمْ يَتْلُونَ ٱلْكِتَٰبَ ۗ كَذَٰلِكَ قَالَ ٱلَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ مِثْلَ قَوْلِهِمْ ۚ فَٱللَّهُ يَحْكُمُ بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَ ٱلْقِيَٰمَةِ فِيمَا كَانُوا۟ فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ ﴿١١٣﴾﴾

[سورة البقرة: ١١٣]

﴿The Jews said that the Christians follow nothing [i.e. are not on the right religion]; and the Christians said that the Jews follow nothing [i.e. are not on the right religion]; though they both recite the Scripture. Thus do those who know not [the polytheists] speak the same as their words. But Allah will judge between them on the Day of Resurrection about that wherein they have been differing.﴾ *(Qur'an 2: 113)*

6. Differentiation between people in this life and before Allah is based on the degree to which a person can do good for himself and for others.

"All the people are the dependents of Allah, and the most beloved of them to Him is the one who does most good for His dependents."[22]

[22] Narrated by al-Bazzār.

﴿... إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِندَ ٱللَّهِ أَتْقَىٰكُمْ ۚ ... ﴿١٣﴾﴾ [سورة الحجرات: ١٣]

﴿Verily, the most honourable of you with Allah is that [believer] who has *at-Taqwa* [i.e. he is one of the *Muttaqūn* (the pious)].﴾ *(Qur'an 49: 13)*

7. Differences of religion do not mean that we should not be kind, uphold ties of kinship or show hostility:

﴿ٱلْيَوْمَ أُحِلَّ لَكُمُ ٱلطَّيِّبَٰتُ ۖ وَطَعَامُ ٱلَّذِينَ أُوتُوا۟ ٱلْكِتَٰبَ حِلٌّ لَّكُمْ وَطَعَامُكُمْ حِلٌّ لَّهُمْ ۖ وَٱلْمُحْصَنَٰتُ مِنَ ٱلْمُؤْمِنَٰتِ وَٱلْمُحْصَنَٰتُ مِنَ ٱلَّذِينَ أُوتُوا۟ ٱلْكِتَٰبَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ ... ﴿٥﴾﴾

[سورة المائدة: ٥]

﴿This day [all] good foods have been made lawful, and the food of those who were given the Scripture is lawful for you and your food is lawful for them. And [lawful in marriage are] chaste women from among the believers and chaste women from among those who were given the Scriptures before you...﴾ *(Qur'an 5: 5)*

8. If people follow different religions, they are permitted to dispute in a kind and gentle manner, within the constraints of good manners, establishing proof and debating in a sound manner.

﴿۞ وَلَا تُجَٰدِلُوٓا۟ أَهْلَ ٱلْكِتَٰبِ إِلَّا بِٱلَّتِى هِىَ أَحْسَنُ ... ﴿٤٦﴾﴾

[سورة العنكبوت: ٤٦]

﴿And do not argue with the People of the Scripture except in a way that is best...﴾ *(Qur'an 29: 46)*

It is not permissible to be rude towards those who hold different views, or to insult their beliefs, even if they are idolaters:

﴿وَلَا تَسُبُّوا۟ ٱلَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ مِن دُونِ ٱللَّهِ فَيَسُبُّوا۟ ٱللَّهَ عَدْوًۢا بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ

﴿... وَتَعَاوَنُوا۟ عَلَى ٱلْبِرِّ وَٱلتَّقْوَىٰ ۖ وَلَا تَعَاوَنُوا۟ عَلَى ٱلْإِثْمِ وَٱلْعُدْوَٰنِ ...﴿٢﴾﴾

[سورة المائدة: ٢]

﴿... Help you one another in *al-Birr* and *at-Taqwa* [virtue, righteousness and piety]; but do not help one another in sin and transgression...﴾ *(Qur'an 5: 2)*

With regard to the differences between them, Allah alone is the One Who will judge between them on the Day of Resurrection:

﴿وَقَالَتِ ٱلْيَهُودُ لَيْسَتِ ٱلنَّصَٰرَىٰ عَلَىٰ شَىْءٍ وَقَالَتِ ٱلنَّصَٰرَىٰ لَيْسَتِ ٱلْيَهُودُ عَلَىٰ شَىْءٍ وَهُمْ يَتْلُونَ ٱلْكِتَٰبَ ۗ كَذَٰلِكَ قَالَ ٱلَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ مِثْلَ قَوْلِهِمْ ۚ فَٱللَّهُ يَحْكُمُ بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَ ٱلْقِيَٰمَةِ فِيمَا كَانُوا۟ فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ ﴿١١٣﴾﴾

[سورة البقرة: ١١٣]

﴿The Jews said that the Christians follow nothing [i.e. are not on the right religion]; and the Christians said that the Jews follow nothing [i.e. are not on the right religion]; though they both recite the Scripture. Thus do those who know not [the polytheists] speak the same as their words. But Allah will judge between them on the Day of Resurrection about that wherein they have been differing.﴾ *(Qur'an 2: 113)*

6. Differentiation between people in this life and before Allah is based on the degree to which a person can do good for himself and for others.

"All the people are the dependents of Allah, and the most beloved of them to Him is the one who does most good for His dependents."[22]

[22] Narrated by al-Bazzār.

﴿... إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِندَ ٱللَّهِ أَتْقَىٰكُمْ ۚ ...﴿١٣﴾﴾ [سورة الحجرات: ١٣]

﴿Verily, the most honourable of you with Allah is that [believer] who has *at-Taqwa* [i.e. he is one of the *Muttaqūn* (the pious)].﴾ *(Qur'an 49: 13)*

7. Differences of religion do not mean that we should not be kind, uphold ties of kinship or show hostility:

﴿ٱلْيَوْمَ أُحِلَّ لَكُمُ ٱلطَّيِّبَٰتُ ۖ وَطَعَامُ ٱلَّذِينَ أُوتُوا۟ ٱلْكِتَٰبَ حِلٌّ لَّكُمْ ۖ وَطَعَامُكُمْ حِلٌّ لَّهُمْ ۖ وَٱلْمُحْصَنَٰتُ مِنَ ٱلْمُؤْمِنَٰتِ وَٱلْمُحْصَنَٰتُ مِنَ ٱلَّذِينَ أُوتُوا۟ ٱلْكِتَٰبَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ ...﴿٥﴾﴾

[سورة المائدة: ٥]

﴿This day [all] good foods have been made lawful, and the food of those who were given the Scripture is lawful for you and your food is lawful for them. And [lawful in marriage are] chaste women from among the believers and chaste women from among those who were given the Scriptures before you...﴾ *(Qur'an 5: 5)*

8. If people follow different religions, they are permitted to dispute in a kind and gentle manner, within the constraints of good manners, establishing proof and debating in a sound manner.

﴿وَلَا تُجَٰدِلُوٓا۟ أَهْلَ ٱلْكِتَٰبِ إِلَّا بِٱلَّتِى هِىَ أَحْسَنُ ...﴿٤٦﴾﴾

[سورة العنكبوت: ٤٦]

﴿And do not argue with the People of the Scripture except in a way that is best...﴾ *(Qur'an 29: 46)*

It is not permissible to be rude towards those who hold different views, or to insult their beliefs, even if they are idolaters:

﴿وَلَا تَسُبُّوا۟ ٱلَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ مِن دُونِ ٱللَّهِ فَيَسُبُّوا۟ ٱللَّهَ عَدْوًۢا بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ

كَذَٰلِكَ زَيَّنَّا لِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ عَمَلَهُمْ ثُمَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِم مَّرْجِعُهُمْ فَيُنَبِّئُهُم بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٠٨﴾

[سورة الأنعام: ١٠٨]

﴿And insult not those who invoke other than Allah, lest they should insult Allah wrongfully without knowledge. Thus We have made fair-seeming to each people their deeds. Then to their Lord is their return and He shall then inform them of all that they used to do.﴾ *(Qur'an 6: 108)*

9. If the beliefs of the ummah come under attack, we must respond in order to protect our beliefs and ward off *fitnah* (tribulation):

﴿وَقَٰتِلُوهُمْ حَتَّىٰ لَا تَكُونَ فِتْنَةٌ وَيَكُونَ ٱلدِّينُ لِلَّهِ ... ﴿١٩٣﴾﴾

[سورة البقرة: ١٩٣]

﴿And fight them until there is no more *Fitnah* [disbelief, dissension, trial, civil strife] and [all and every kind of] worship is for Allah [Alone]...﴾ *(Qur'an 2: 193)*

﴿إِنَّمَا يَنْهَىٰكُمُ ٱللَّهُ عَنِ ٱلَّذِينَ قَٰتَلُوكُمْ فِى ٱلدِّينِ وَأَخْرَجُوكُم مِّن دِيَٰرِكُمْ وَظَٰهَرُوا عَلَىٰٓ إِخْرَاجِكُمْ أَن تَوَلَّوْهُمْ ... ﴿٩﴾﴾

[سورة الممتحنة: ٩]

﴿Allah only forbids you from those who fight you because of religion and expel you from your homes and aid in your expulsion — [forbids] that you make allies of them...﴾ *(Qur'an 60: 9)*

10. If the ummah gains victory over those who attacked their religion or sought to deprive it of freedom, it is not permissible to take revenge on them by forcing them to give up their religion or persecuting them for their beliefs. It is sufficient for them to acknowledge the authority of the state and to give their allegiance

to it, so that "they will share the same rights and obligations as us."

These are the principles of religious tolerance in Islam, on which our civilization is based. These principles oblige the Muslim to believe in all the Prophets and Messengers of Allah, to speak of all of them with respect, not to mistreat their followers, to deal with them all in a good and gentle manner, speaking kindly to them, being a good neighbour to them, accepting their hospitality, and marrying from among them so that the families and bloodlines will be mixed.

Islam obliges the Muslim state to guard their places of worship and not to interfere in their beliefs or rule against them unfairly; they are to be treated equally with Muslims in terms of rights and obligations; their honour, lives and futures are to be protected just as those of the Muslims are to be protected.

On these bases our civilization was built, through which the world saw for the first time a religion building a civilization which did not persecute the followers of other religions or exclude non-believers from work or social status. This tolerance remained the way of the Islamic civilization from the time its foundations were laid by Muhammad (ﷺ) until it began to decline, when these principles were lost and forgotten, and people became ignorant of their religion, and they abandoned this noble religious tolerance.

During the life of the Prophet (ﷺ)

When the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) migrated to Madīnah, there was a large number of Jews in the city. One of the first affairs of state that he dealt with was to establish a treaty with them, according to which their beliefs were to be respected and the state was obliged to ward off harm from them; they were to work as one

with the Muslims against anyone who sought to attack Madīnah. Thus the Messenger of Allah applied the principles of religious tolerance from the earliest beginnings of Islamic civilization.

The Messenger (ﷺ) had neighbours from among the People of the Book; he used to treat them kindly, giving them gifts and accepting gifts from them, until a Jewish woman put poison in a leg of a lamb which she gave him as a gift, because he used to accept her gifts and was a good neighbour to her. When a delegation of the Ethiopian Christians came to Madīnah, the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) let them stay in the mosque, and he himself took care of them and served them. One of the things that he said that day was:

> "They honoured our companions, so I want to honour them myself."

One day a delegation of the Christians from Najrān came to him, and he let them stay in the mosque and hold their prayers there. They would be praying on one side of the mosque, and the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) and the Muslims would be praying on the other side. When they wanted to discuss with the Messenger (ﷺ) and defend their religion, he listened to them and debated with them in a gentle, polite and tolerant manner. The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) accepted a gift of a slave girl from al-Muqawqis (the ruler of Egypt), and took her as a wife. She bore him a son, Ibrahīm, who only lived for a few months. One of the things that he enjoined upon the Muslims was:

> "Treat the Egyptians well, for you are related to them through ties of blood and ties of marriage."

The *khulafā'* followed the teachings of the Messenger with regard to kind and humane religious tolerance after he died. So we

see that 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, when he entered *Bayt al-Maqdis* (Jerusalem) as a conqueror, he responded to the Christians' request that no Jew be allowed to live among them. The time for *'Aṣr* (afternoon) prayer came whilst he was inside the main church of Jerusalem, but he refused to pray there lest the Muslims later use that as an excuse to demand possession of it and take it as a mosque. A Christian woman living in Egypt complained to him that 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ had incorporated her house into the mosque, against her objections. He asked 'Amr about that, and he told him that the numbers of Muslims had increased and the mosque had become too small for them. This woman's house was next to the mosque, and 'Amr had offered her the price of her house and more, but she did not agree to that. This left 'Amr with no option but to knock down her house and incorporate it into the mosque. He had put the money in the *bayt al-māl* (treasury of the Islamic state) for her to take whenever she wanted. Even though this was permissible according to our present laws and this was a case in which 'Amr's action may have been justified, 'Umar did not approve of that; he ordered 'Amr to knock down the new part of the mosque and restore the Christian woman's house!

This is the tolerant spirit which prevailed in the society built on the principles of our civilization. We see kinds of religious tolerance which were not found anywhere else in history, not even in the modern age!

Another example of religious tolerance is that mosques were often built next to churches in our civilization. The clergy in the churches were given full authority over their flocks with regard to all religious and church matters, and the state did not interfere in that. Rather, the state would interfere in order to solve problems between Christian groups and would judge justly between them. The Byzantine Christians used to persecute the Copts of Egypt

during the Byzantine period, and take away their churches, but when the Muslims conquered Egypt they gave the churches back to the Copts and restored their rights. After that the Copts transgressed against the Byzantines in revenge for what they had done to them before the Arab conquest. The Byzantines complained about that to Hārūn al-Rashīd, and he ordered that the churches owned by the Copts in Egypt should be returned to the Byzantines, after he had consulted with the Patriarch of the Byzantines concerning this matter.

With regard to the freedom of the clergy in their rituals and their authority over their flocks with no interference from the state, the Christian inhabitants of the land felt free in a manner that they had never felt under the rule of Byzantium. None of us can forget the attitude of Muhammad al-Fātiḥ when he took control of Byzantium, which was the seat of the Orthodox Patriarchy for the entire east. On that day he proclaimed that its inhabitants — all of whom were Christians — were safe; their money, their lives, their beliefs, their churches, their crosses were all safe; they were exempted from military service; their leaders were given the authority to enact legislation and settle disputes that arose between members of their flocks, without any interference from the state! The inhabitants of Constantinople saw a great difference between the way they had been treated during the Byzantine era and the way Muhammad al-Fātiḥ treated them. The Byzantines had interfered in doctrinal disputes and were biased in favour of the followers of their own church and against the followers of other churches. So the people were happy with the new rule and were delighted with this religious tolerance, the like of which they had never seen with any of their previous rulers, even though those rulers were also Christian. The authority granted to the Patriarch of Byzantium was like a state within a state, and he and

his followers enjoyed this privilege for nearly five hundred years, acting independently. These privileges were not granted in return for supplying soldiers or money to the state. But unfortunately this religious tolerance, which was historically unique, led to the granting of privileges to foreigners, which was exploited by the Europeans at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century in a manner that undermined the country's sovereignty.

Another of the manifestations of religious tolerance in our civilization is that in many churches, the Muslims and Christians used to pray simultaneously, at the time of the Islamic conquest! We have seen how the Prophet (ﷺ) allowed the Christians of Najrān to pray in his mosque alongside the Muslims who were doing their own prayers. In the Cathedral of Saint John in Damascus, which later became the Umayyad Mosque, the Christians agreed to let the Muslims take half of it, and the Muslims were happy to pray there, so that you could see the followers of the two religions praying at the same time next to one another, with the Muslims facing the *qiblah* and the Christians facing the east. This was a unique example in history with deep significance, indicative of the religious tolerance of our civilization.

Another example of religious tolerance is that jobs would be given to those who were most deserving and most qualified, regardless of their beliefs and school of thought. Hence, during the Umayyad and Abbasid periods, Christian doctors were highly respected by the Caliphs and they supervised the schools of medicine in Baghdad and Damascus for a long time. The Christian doctor Ibn Athāl was the private doctor of Mu'āwiyah, and Sarjoon was his scribe. Marwān appointed Athnasius, along with another called Ishāq, to some government positions in Egypt,

then Athnasius reached positions of leadership in those departments, and he was a rich and powerful man who owned four thousand slaves and a lot of houses, villages, gardens and gold and silver. He built a church in ar-Raha with the rent from four hundred shops that he owned, and he became so famous that 'Abdul-Malik ibn Marwān appointed him to teach his young brother 'Abdul-'Azīz who later became the governor of Egypt and who was the father of 'Umar ibn 'Abdul-'Azīz.

One of the most famous doctors who were well-liked by the Caliphs was Jarjīs ibn Bakhtiyashū', who was close to and well-liked by the Caliph al-Manṣūr. The Caliph was eager that he should be happy; Jarjīs had a wife who was old and sick, so al-Manṣūr sent to him three beautiful slave-women. But Jarjīs refused to accept them saying, "My religion does not allow me to marry another wife so long as my wife is still alive." So al-Manṣūr was pleased with him and respected him even more. When he fell sick, al-Manṣūr ordered that he should be brought to the public hostel, and he went there walking, to ask how he was. The doctor asked him for permission to go back to his homeland so that he might be buried with his forefathers. Al-Manṣūr invited him to enter Islam so that he might go to Paradise, but he refused and said, "I want to be with my forefathers, in heaven or hell." Al-Manṣūr smiled and issued orders that preparations be made for his journey and he gave him ten thousand dinars.

The Christian Salmawayh ibn Banān was the doctor of al-Mu'taṣim; when he died, al-Mu'taṣim grieved deeply and ordered that he should be buried with incense and candles, according to the way of his religion.

Bakhtiyashū' ibn Jibra'īl was the doctor of al-Mutawakkil, and was well-liked by him; he was the equal of the caliph with

regard to dress, luxury, great wealth and respect.

Poets and literati were also well-liked by the Caliphs and governors, regardless of their religion or school of thought. We all know of the position and status of al-Akhṭal during the Umayyad period. He used to visit 'Abdul-Malik without permission, wearing a cloak of silk on which there were amulets, with a golden cross dangling from his neck on a golden chain, and with wine dripping from his beard. He is the one who condemned the Anṣār in a lengthy poem in which he said, "Meanness rests beneath the turbans of the Anṣār." The Anṣār[23] were upset by that, and they sent their leader an-Nu'mān ibn Bashīr, the Companion of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) to 'Abdul-Malik ibn Marwān. He raised his turban and said, "Do you see any meanness here, O' *Amīr al-Mu'minīn*?" The Caliph spoke kindly to him, without offending al-Akhṭal in any way.

Like the caliphs, ordinary individuals also befriended whoever they wanted to, regardless of religion. Ibrahīm ibn Hilāl was a Sabian[24] and he reached the highest positions in the state. He had a good relationship and strong friendships with the leading Muslim literati and scholars. When he died, he was eulogized by ash-Sharīf al-Raḍiy, the leader of the Hāshimis and 'Alawis, in immortal verse which included the words:

"Have you seen whom they carried on their shoulders?
Have you seen how the light of the gathering has
been extinguished?
I did not know, before they placed you in the ground,
That the ground could be more sublime than the mountains."

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[23] Madīnah citizens who supported the Prophet (ﷺ) upon his migration from Makkah.

[24] Madaean: Judaeo-Christian gnostic, baptist sect in Mesopotamia.

After that, ash-Sharīf continued to miss him and recite poetry eulogizing him on every occasion. For example, he passed by his grave and burst into tears and said:

"I said to a caravan passing by,
Come and I will show you a fading glory.
I eulogized you, hoping that it would calm me down,
But it only increased my grief.
I know that weeping will not help,
But still I have my hopes and wishes."

In the study-circles that were held in the presence of the Caliphs, scholars would come together despite the differences in their religions and schools of thought. Al-Mamūn (a Caliph) had a study-circle in which scholars of all religions and schools of thought would come together. He used to say to them:

> "Discuss whatever you want of knowledge, without each of you quoting his religious book as evidence, lest that should provoke sectarian problems."

The same was true of the people's study-circles. Khalaf ibn al-Muthanna said:

> "We saw in Baṣrah ten people who come together in a gathering, and they have no peers in knowledge and intelligence in this world. They are: Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad, the grammarian (who was Sunni); al-Ḥumayri the poet (who was Shi'i); Sāliḥ ibn 'Abdul-Quddūs (who was a heretic and a dualist); Sufyān ibn Majāshi' (who was a Ṣafari Khāriji); Bashshār ibn Burd (who was a promiscuous Shu'ūbi[25]); Ḥammād 'Ajrad (who was a Shu'ūbi heretic); Ibn Ra's al-Jālūt

[25] Shu'ūbi: A group of people who were nationalistic and were speaking against the Arabs.

> the poet (who was a Jew); Ibn Nadhīr the theologian (who was a Christian); 'Umar ibn al-Mu'ayyid (who was a Magian); Ibn Sinān al-Ḥarrāni, the poet (who was a Sabian). They used to meet and discuss poetry and current affairs. They would talk in a friendly atmosphere, such that one would hardly realize that there were the great differences of religion and belief among them."

This tolerance extended to houses and families, so that in one house there may be four brothers, one of whom was Sunni, the second Shi'i, the third Khāriji and the fourth Mu'tazili, but they would live in perfect harmony. Or in one house there would be a pious brother and a profligate one; the pious one would devote himself to worship whilst the profligate one indulged in promiscuous behaviour. One of the stories mentioned in the books of literature describes two brothers living in one house. One of them was pious and lived on the lower floor, and the other was profligate and lived on the upper floor. One night the profligate brother was staying up with some friends, singing and making noise, which disturbed the pious brother and kept him from sleeping. The pious brother called out to his profligate brother, ﴿Do then those who devise evil plots feel secure that Allah will not sink them into the earth.﴾ *(Qur'an 16: 45)*, and the profligate brother immediately replied: ﴿And Allah would not punish them while you are amongst them﴾ *(Qur'an 8: 33)*. [This story seems to make light of sin and leaves the evildoer with the last word. Consider omitting it as the point is amply made with the preceding comments.]

[The following section is also of concern, as there are *aḥādīth* (hadiths) which clearly indicate that it is *ḥarām* to participate in the festivals of the *kuffār* (unbelievers) or to express joy on those

occasions. Even if such events took place that does not mean that such actions are approved of in Shari'ah (Islamic rulings)]

Another example of religious tolerance in our civilization is sharing in the excitement and decoration of religious festivals. From the time of the Umawi period, the Christians had their public celebrations in the streets, in which they would carry their crosses and their clergy would appear in their priestly garments. The Patriarch *Mikhael* entered the city of Alexandria in a splendid celebration, with candles, crosses and the Gospels carried before him, and the priests were crying out, "The Lord has sent to us a trustworthy shepherd who is the new Mark." That happened at the time of Hishām ibn 'Abdul-Malik.

At the time of ar-Rashīd, it was the custom of the Christians to go out in a great parade, with the cross at the front; that was on the occasion of Easter.

Al-Maqdisi tells us in *Aḥsan at-Taqāsīm* that the marketplaces in Shirāz would be adorned for the Christian festivals, and that the Egyptians used to celebrate the onset of the Nile floods at the time of the Easter celebration.

Al-Maqrīzi tells us in *al-Khuṭaṭ* that the people — at the time of the al-Ikhshīdis — used to hold great celebrations on the occasion of the Epiphany (commemoration of the Baptism of Christ). In 330 AH the celebrations of the Epiphany were held on a splendid scale. Muhammad ibn Ṭaghaj al-Ikhshīdi stayed in his palace on the island of al-Manīl with one thousand lamps lit around him. The people followed his example and lit torches, lamps and candles. The boats were filled with thousands of Christians and Muslims, and the rooftops and riverbanks were crowded with people, all wearing their finest clothes. Many of them brought out food and drink, and put them in vessels of gold

and silver. On that night the roads were not closed and most of the people immersed themselves in the water, believing that bathing on the night of the Epiphany would protect them against sickness and disease.

It is strange to note that these expressions of friendship continued even during the Crusades, when the west launched historical attacks against the Muslim world in the name of the cross. The traveller Ibn Jubayr tells us of his travels:

"One of the strange things that are happening when the flames of conflict are burning between the Muslims and the Christians and two groups of them may face one another in a stand-off, is that Muslim and Christian friends may visit one another without any objections; caravans are still carrying goods from Egypt to Damascus through the Frankish lands with no obstacles — the Muslims pay a tax to the Christians in their lands, and Christian merchants in the Muslim lands pay a tax on their goods, and the agreement between them is fair. The warriors are busy with their war, and the people are fine, and the world will go to the victor."

The religious tolerance in our civilization is something that has no equal in the history of the past ages. Western historians who respect the truth are agreed that this tolerance existed, and they commend it.

The famous American Mr. Draper says:

"The first Muslims, at the time of the Caliphs, did not just respect the Christian, Nestorian and Jewish scholars, they also delegated many important tasks to them and promoted them to the highest offices of state. Harūn ar-Rashīd put all the schools under the supervision of Hana ibn Māsawayh, and he did not

pay any attention to the country in which the scholar lived, or the religion into which he had been born; he only looked at the status of his knowledge."

The famous modern historian, Wells, says, in his discussion of Islamic teaching:

"It established great traditions of just interaction and it inspired in people a spirit of generosity and tolerance, as it is humane in character and its principles may be readily applied in real life. It created a group of people in whom there was little of the cruelty and oppression that overwhelm the world, when compared with the other groups that came before it..."

And he says of Islam,

"It is filled with the spirit of kindness, tolerance and brotherhood."

Sir Mark Sayis said, describing the Islamic Empire at the time of ar-Rashīd:

"The Christians, idolaters, Jews and Muslims were equal, working in the service of the government."

Tarnūn says:

"The religion had nothing to do with the work of poets and singers."

Levi Protestall says in his book *Islamic Spain in the Tenth Century*:

"The scribe who wrote down contracts would often be a Christian or a Jew, and many Christians and Jews worked as civil servants. They ran the affairs of the state and even played a role in matters of war. Among the Jews were some who

would represent the Caliph as ambassadors to the states of western Europe."

Renaud says of the Arab campaigns in France, Switzerland, Italy and the islands of the Mediterranean:

"The Muslims in the cities of Andalusia used to treat the Christians well, and the Christians used to respect the feelings of the Muslims, circumcise their children and refrain from eating pork."

Arnold says, speaking of religious schools of thought among the Christians:

"But the principles of Islamic tolerance forbade such actions which imply oppression. It seems to us that the Muslims, unlike others, did not spare any effort to treat all the Christians under their rule with fairness and justice. For example, after the conquest of Egypt, the Jacobites took the opportunity of the end of Byzantine rule to take over the churches of the Orthodox, but the Muslims ultimately restored them to their rightful owners, after the Orthodox proved that they were the owners..."

When we look at the tolerance which the Muslims extended to the Christians under their authority at the beginning of Islamic rule, we see that the idea that the sword was the factor which made people become Muslim cannot be believed.

We have gone into detail about the religious tolerance in our civilization, because we want to refute the lies that the racist westerners tell about our history, saying that we were cruel and forced people to enter our religion, and that we mistreated and persecuted non-Muslims. It would have been better for them not to open this door on themselves, because their shameful acts of

religious hatred against the Muslims during the Crusades and in Spain and in the modern age should make them hang their heads in shame. Indeed, their shameful acts of persecution against one another is something that cannot be denied by any student of history, such as the slaughters of Catholics and Protestants, the Saint Bartholomew massacre, the religious wars which the papacy launched against its opponents among the peoples of Europe and the atrocities of the Inquisition in the Middle Ages — all of that constitutes irrefutable proof that the westerners are the most partisan and hate-filled of people against those who hold different beliefs and opinions to their own, even if they are of the same race! And it proves that they knew nothing of religious tolerance throughout history, from ancient times, and they are still controlled by this hateful religious discrimination against Muslims, operating under the transparent covers of politics and colonialism.

We think that the best way to conclude this discussion of our tolerance and their intolerance is to quote the words of one of the greatest Christian priests who cannot be biased. The Patriarch of Antioch, Mikhael the Great, who lived in the latter part of the twelfth century, after the eastern churches had been under Islamic rule for five hundred years, spoke of the tolerance of the Muslims and how the Byzantines had persecuted the eastern churches. He said:

"This is the reason why the God of vengeance, Who alone has power and might, and Who transfers power from one human nation to another as He wills, when He saw the evils of the Byzantines who had resorted to force and robbed our churches and confiscated our homes in all the areas they ruled, and they persecuted us mercilessly, He sent the sons of Ishmael (the

Arabs) from the south (the Arabian Peninsula) to rid us of Byzantine oppression at their hands. We may have incurred some losses because of the Catholic churches being taken away from us and given to the Chalcedonians, and those churches have remained in their possession, because when the cities surrendered to the Arabs, they decided that each Christian group should keep the churches that were in their possession, and at that time, the great church of Homs and the church of Hawrān had been taken from us. But nevertheless, it was no insignificant matter to rid ourselves of the cruelty of Byzantium and its persecution and zeal against us, and to find ourselves living in peace and security."

Do you not see what Gustave Le Bon said:

"The world had never seen conquerors who were merciful and compassionate like the Arabs, nor any religion that was tolerant like their religion."

He is speaking the truth before he is fair to the Muslims.

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CHAPTER SIX

Our Etiquette in War

Now we will look at another aspect of the humane tendency in our civilization, which is a unique feature. For good attitudes, kindness, mercy towards the weak and tolerance towards neighbours and relatives are all things which every nation, no matter how barbaric, may do at times of peace. But to treat others well in war, to be kind to the enemy, to show mercy to women, children and the elderly, to show tolerance towards the conquered peoples — not every nation can do this, not every leader at war can have these attributes. The sight of blood provokes the blood-lust; aggression fans the flames of hatred, and the intoxication of victory makes the conquerors commit the most abhorrent acts of vengeance. This is the history of all states, ancient and modern; indeed it is the history of man since Qābīl (Cain) shed the blood of his brother Hābīl (Abel):

﴿ ... إِذْ قَرَّبَا قُرْبَانًا فَتُقُبِّلَ مِنْ أَحَدِهِمَا وَلَمْ يُتَقَبَّلْ مِنَ ٱلْآخَرِ قَالَ لَأَقْتُلَنَّكَ ۖ قَالَ إِنَّمَا يَتَقَبَّلُ ٱللَّهُ مِنَ ٱلْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٢٧﴾ ﴾ [سورة المائدة: ٢٧]

﴿... when each offered a sacrifice [to Allah], it was accepted from the one but not from the other. The latter said to the former: 'I will surely, kill you.' The former said: 'Verily, Allah accepts only from those who are *al-Muttaqūn* [the pious].'﴾ *(Qur'an 5: 27)*

Hence history bestowed immortality upon the leaders of our civilization, both military and civilian, conquerors and rulers, for

they are unique among the great men of all civilizations, distinguished by their just and merciful humanity in the intense heat of battle and in situations which would provoke the desire for vengeance and bloodshed. I swear that if history had not recorded this unique miracle in the history of warfare in such a manner that its veracity cannot be doubted, I would have said that it was a fable and a myth that never really happened!

Our civilization emerged at a time when the entire world was governed by the law of the jungle. The strong would kill the weak, the armed would steal from the unarmed and war was a legitimate means that was recognized by all religions, nations and peoples, with no limits or restrictions, with no distinction made between just war and unjust war. Everyone who was able to overpower a nation in its own land, force it to give up its beliefs and enslave its men and women, would do so, with no sense of guilt or shame. But our civilization did not approve of this unjust way which had reduced mankind to the level of savage beasts; rather it declared that the basic principle governing the relationships between nations was mutual respect and cooperation.

﴿يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلنَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَٰكُم مِّن ذَكَرٍ وَأُنثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَٰكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَآئِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوٓاْ ... ﴿١٣﴾﴾

[سورة الحجرات: ١٣]

﴿O' mankind! We have created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another...﴾ *(Qur'an 49: 13)*

Thus peace became the natural relationship between peoples.

If a nation insists on war and aggression against another, then the threatened nation must prepare to ward off that aggression, because if it fails to make such preparations it is only encouraging the aggression and making it easier.

﴿وَأَعِدُّواْ لَهُم مَّا ٱسْتَطَعْتُم مِّن قُوَّةٍ وَمِن رِّبَاطِ ٱلْخَيْلِ تُرْهِبُونَ بِهِۦ عَدُوَّ ٱللَّهِ وَعَدُوَّكُمْ ... ﴿٦٠﴾﴾

[سورة الأنفال: ٦٠]

﴿And make ready against them all you can of power, including steeds of war [tanks, planes, missiles, artillery] to threaten the enemy of Allah and your enemy...﴾

(Qur'an 8: 60)

But if the aggressor nation turns away from its aggressive intentions and desires peace and reconciliation, then the other nation must also seek peace and strive for it.

﴿وَإِن جَنَحُواْ لِلسَّلْمِ فَٱجْنَحْ لَهَا وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى ٱللَّهِ ... ﴿٦١﴾﴾

[سورة الأنفال: ٦١]

﴿But if they incline to peace, you also incline to it, and [put your] trust in Allah...﴾ *(Qur'an 8: 61)*

But if it insists on war, then force should be met with force, and aggression with aggression:

﴿وَقَٰتِلُواْ فِى سَبِيلِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلَّذِينَ يُقَٰتِلُونَكُمْ ... ﴿١٩٠﴾﴾

[سورة البقرة: ١٩٠]

﴿And fight in the way of Allah those who fight you...﴾

(Qur'an 2: 190)

Hence, the principles of our civilization become clear: it is forbidden to wage war simply to seize wealth and to humiliate peoples; rather the war that is prescribed in Islam is for two purposes only:

1 - To defend the beliefs and morals of the ummah.
2 - To defend the freedom, independence and safety of the people.

﴿وَقَٰتِلُوهُمْ حَتَّىٰ لَا تَكُونَ فِتْنَةٌ وَيَكُونَ ٱلدِّينُ لِلَّهِ ۖ فَإِنِ ٱنتَهَوْا۟ فَلَا عُدْوَٰنَ إِلَّا عَلَى ٱلظَّٰلِمِينَ ﴿١٩٣﴾﴾

[سورة البَقَرَة: ١٩٣]

﴿And fight them until there is no more *Fitnah* [disbelief and worshipping of others along with Allah] and [all and every kind of] worship is for Allah [Alone]. But if they cease, let there be no transgression except against *adh-Dhālimūn* [the polytheists, and wrong-doers].﴾

(Qur'an 2: 193)

The right to freedom of belief is not only limited to the nation that declares war, rather that nation must also guarantee the freedom of all beliefs, and protect the places of worship of all religions:

﴿... وَلَوْلَا دَفْعُ ٱللَّهِ ٱلنَّاسَ بَعْضَهُم بِبَعْضٍ لَّهُدِّمَتْ صَوَٰمِعُ وَبِيَعٌ وَصَلَوَٰتٌ وَمَسَٰجِدُ يُذْكَرُ فِيهَا ٱسْمُ ٱللَّهِ كَثِيرًا ۗ ... ﴿٤٠﴾﴾

[سورة الحَجّ: ٤٠]

﴿... For had it not been that Allah checks one set of people by means of another, monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques, wherein the Name of Allah is mentioned much would surely, have been pulled down...﴾

(Qur'an 22: 40)

The most marvellous principle that was proclaimed by our civilization is that we are obliged to defend the weak and humiliated of other peoples just as we are obliged to defend our own freedom and dignity:

﴿وَمَا لَكُمْ لَا تُقَٰتِلُونَ فِى سَبِيلِ ٱللَّهِ وَٱلْمُسْتَضْعَفِينَ مِنَ ٱلرِّجَالِ وَٱلنِّسَآءِ وَٱلْوِلْدَٰنِ ٱلَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَآ أَخْرِجْنَا مِنْ هَٰذِهِ ٱلْقَرْيَةِ ٱلظَّالِمِ أَهْلُهَا وَٱجْعَل

لَّنَا مِن لَّدُنكَ وَلِيًّا وَٱجْعَل لَّنَا مِن لَّدُنكَ نَصِيرًا ﴿٧٥﴾﴾

[سورة النِّسَاء: ٧٥]

﴿And what is wrong with you that you fight not in the Cause of Allah, and [for] the oppressed among men, women, and children, whose cry is: 'Our Lord! Rescue us from this town whose people are oppressors; and raise for us from You one who will protect, and raise for us from You one who will help.'﴾ *(Qur'an 4: 75)*

War which is declared to defend our faith and to defend freedom and peace is the kind of war which is prescribed in Islam and which is a means of drawing closer to Allah. It is the war whose martyrs attain Paradise. This is the war which our civilization describes as war for the sake of Allah; anything else is war for the sake of oppression and corruption. How wonderful is the way in which permissible war is mentioned in contrast with war as known among all nations in the following verse:

﴿ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ يُقَٰتِلُونَ فِى سَبِيلِ ٱللَّهِ ۖ وَٱلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا۟ يُقَٰتِلُونَ فِى سَبِيلِ ٱلطَّٰغُوتِ فَقَٰتِلُوٓا۟ أَوْلِيَآءَ ٱلشَّيْطَٰنِ ۖ إِنَّ كَيْدَ ٱلشَّيْطَٰنِ كَانَ ضَعِيفًا ﴿٧٦﴾﴾

[سورة النِّسَاء: ٧٦]

﴿Those who believe, fight in the Cause of Allah, and those who disbelieve, fight in the cause of *Ṭāghūt* [Satan]. So fight you against the allies of *Shayṭān* [Satan]; ever feeble indeed is the plot of *Shayṭān* [Satan].﴾ *(Qur'an 4: 76)*

Our civilization declares war for the sake of Allah, i.e., in the path of Allah, and the path of Allah is goodness and truth and dignity; whereas people declare war for the sake of falsehood and

the *Shayṭān*, and the *Shayṭān* (Satan) represents evil, hatred and corruption. If this is the purpose of wars in our civilization, it is not permissible when declaring war for the sake of goodness and truth then to commit acts of falsehood and evil. For this reason, one of the principles of our civilization in war is that we should not fight anyone except those who fight us and commit aggression against us:

﴿... فَٱعۡتَدُواْ عَلَيۡهِ بِمِثۡلِ مَا ٱعۡتَدَىٰ عَلَيۡكُمۡۚ ... ﴿١٩٤﴾﴾

[سورة البَقَرَة: ١٩٤]

﴿... Then assault him in the same way that he has assaulted you...﴾ *(Qur'an 2: 194)*

If we overstep the mark and fight against those who did not want to fight us or harm those who have not harmed us, then we are transgressing and deviating from the purpose of humane warfare:

﴿وَقَٰتِلُواْ فِي سَبِيلِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلَّذِينَ يُقَٰتِلُونَكُمۡ وَلَا تَعۡتَدُوٓاْۚ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ ٱلۡمُعۡتَدِينَ ﴿١٩٠﴾﴾

[سورة البَقَرَة: ١٩٠]

﴿And fight in the way of Allah those who fight you, but transgress not the limits. Truly, Allah likes not the transgressors.﴾ *(Qur'an 2: 190)*

﴿وَلَمَنِ ٱنتَصَرَ بَعۡدَ ظُلۡمِهِۦ فَأُوْلَٰٓئِكَ مَا عَلَيۡهِم مِّن سَبِيلٍ ﴿٤١﴾ إِنَّمَا ٱلسَّبِيلُ عَلَى ٱلَّذِينَ يَظۡلِمُونَ ٱلنَّاسَ وَيَبۡغُونَ فِي ٱلۡأَرۡضِ بِغَيۡرِ ٱلۡحَقِّۚ أُوْلَٰٓئِكَ لَهُمۡ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٞ ﴿٤٢﴾﴾

[سورة الشورىٰ: ٤١-٤٢]

﴿And indeed whosoever takes revenge after he has suffered wrong, for such there is no way [of blame] against them. The way [of blame] is only against those who oppress men and rebel in the earth without justification; for such there will be a painful torment.﴾ *(Qur'an 42: 41-42)*

When war begins, we must not forget our principles, or be cruel, corrupt or oppressive, or spread wanton destruction. No, humane warfare waged sincerely for the sake of Allah must continue to remain humane in its methods even when fighting becomes intense. Hence came the teachings which were unprecedented in history:

"Do not mutilate. Do not kill any young child or old man or woman. Do not cut down or burn any palm tree. Do not cut down any fruit-bearing tree. Do not slaughter any sheep, cow or camel unless it is for food. You will come across people who have devoted their lives to worship in their hermitages; leave them alone and leave that to which they have devoted themselves."[26]

Do you not see how humane warfare should be that is prescribed for the sake of Allah and not for purposes of evil and aggression? War should continue to be governed by these humane and merciful principles until it is ended by one of two things — either a truce or victory. With regard to truces, peace treaties are inviolable and it is obligatory to fulfil their conditions:

﴿وَأَوۡفُواْ بِعَهۡدِ ٱللَّهِ إِذَا عَٰهَدتُّمۡ وَلَا تَنقُضُواْ ٱلۡأَيۡمَٰنَ بَعۡدَ تَوۡكِيدِهَا وَقَدۡ جَعَلۡتُمُ ٱللَّهَ عَلَيۡكُمۡ كَفِيلًاۚ ... ﴿٩١﴾﴾

[سورة النّحل: ٩١]

﴿And fulfil the Covenant of Allah [*Bay'ah*: pledge for

[26] From the advice issued by Abu Bakr to the army of 'Usāmah.

Islam] when you have covenanted, and break not the oaths after you have confirmed them — and indeed you have appointed Allah your surety...﴾ *(Qur'an 16: 91)*

With regard to victory, this is the victory of the group which got angry for the sake of truth and died for its sake, and will not do anything when it is victorious but that which will reinforce the truth on earth, and prevent hatred and corruption among people:

﴿ٱلَّذِينَ إِن مَّكَّنَّٰهُمْ فِى ٱلْأَرْضِ أَقَامُوا۟ ٱلصَّلَوٰةَ وَءَاتَوُا۟ ٱلزَّكَوٰةَ وَأَمَرُوا۟ بِٱلْمَعْرُوفِ وَنَهَوْا۟ عَنِ ٱلْمُنكَرِ ۗ وَلِلَّهِ عَٰقِبَةُ ٱلْأُمُورِ ﴿٤١﴾﴾

[سورة الحج: ٤١]

﴿Those [Muslim rulers] who, if We give them power in the land, establish prayer and give Zakah and enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong. And to Allah belongs the outcome of [all] matters.﴾ *(Qur'an 22: 41)*

As you can see, this is a definition of the actions of the victorious state and its mission after its victory: spiritual development, justice in society, cooperation in good and in benefitting the people, and striving against evil and corruption in the land.

These are the principles of war in our civilization, and this is our attitude in war: justice, mercy and fulfilment of treaties.

But this, in our view, is not sufficient to prove the superiority of our peaceful civilization in war. Principles alone are not a sign of a nation's nobility and humanity. How often have we seen nations which proclaim the loftiest principles to people when they treat them in the cruelest, cheapest manner, totally lacking in humanity and mercy! What the colonialists have done in our

countries is no secret and the record of their atrocities and cruelty is well known to us. So let us look at the reality of how these principles were applied in our civilization, after which some will be shamed and some will be honoured, where we are distinguished from all other peoples and we stand alone, with no other people or civilization sharing our humane tendencies.

First of all, let us start with the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ), who is the pioneer of our civilization and the one who laid down its foundations and laws, the true expression of its attitude, aims and mission. We do not know of any Prophet, Messenger or righteous person who was tormented, persecuted and hurt in the course of his mission to the extent it happened to the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) for thirteen years in Makkah, where it was all plots, persecution, insults and torment for him and his followers, and conspiracies against his life and the life of his Companions. And ten years in Madīnah, which was an ongoing series of struggles and battles. He never took off the garments of war until the Arabian Peninsula finally submitted in Islam, shortly before his death! Those who fight wars and wield the sword, who fight and are fought against, who are subjected to enmity and persecution, are usually the people with the strongest blood-lust and the greatest thirst for vengeance. But what was the attitude of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) in the wars he fought? How did the founder of the civilization apply the principles he had proclaimed to people?

When the Muslims were defeated at Uḥud, because they had gone against the command of the Messenger (ﷺ), and his enemies surrounded him and sought to kill him, and his Companions were prepared to defend him to the death, he emerged from the battle wounded; his molar had been broken, his face had been cut and

two rings of chain mail had penetrated his cheek. Some of his Companions said to him, "Why do you not pray against them, O' Messenger of Allah?" He (ﷺ) said to them,

"I was not sent as a curse, rather I was sent as a caller and as a mercy... 'O' Allah, guide my people, for they do not know.'"

These are the words of truth which is forced to wage war; these are the words of a Prophet who did not wage war out of the desire to shed blood, but rather from the desire to guide those who had gone astray.

During the battle of Uḥud, the Lion of Allah, Ḥamzah (رضي الله عنه), the paternal uncle of the Prophet (ﷺ) and one of the most famous Arab heroes, was slain. He was killed by a man called Wahshi, at the incitement of Hind, the wife of Abu Sufyān. When the hero fell, Hind took out his liver, then she chewed it as an act of vengeance. Later on, Hind became Muslim, as did Wahshi. What did the Messenger of Allah do? He did no more than to pray for forgiveness for Hind, and before Wahshi became Muslim he said,

"If you can live far away from us, then do so."

This is all that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) did with the one who had killed his paternal uncle Ḥamzah and the woman who had chewed his liver.

In one of the wars he saw a woman from among the enemy who had been killed, and he got angry and denounced that, saying,

"Did I not forbid you to kill women? Such a one would not have fought."

Such was the Messenger of Allah who waged war according to these humane principles whilst he was fighting battles and leading the troops.

When Makkah was conquered and the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) entered it in victory at the head of ten thousand of his heroes and troops, and Quraysh surrendered and stood beneath his feet at the door of the Ka'bah, waiting for the ruling of the Messenger after they had resisted him for twenty-one years, he did nothing more than to say:

"O' Quraysh! What do you think I will do with you?" They said, "Good... (you are) a noble brother, son of a noble brother." He said, "Today I say to you what my brother Yūsuf (Joseph) said before:

﴿... لَا تَثْرِيبَ عَلَيْكُمُ ٱلْيَوْمَ ۖ يَغْفِرُ ٱللَّهُ لَكُمْ ۖ وَهُوَ أَرْحَمُ ٱلرَّٰحِمِينَ ﴿٩٢﴾﴾ [سورة يُوسُف: ٩٢]

﴿... No reproach on you this day; may Allah forgive you, and He is the Most Merciful of those who show mercy!﴾ *(Qur'an 12: 92).*

Go, for you are free — *tulaqā*."

This was Muhammad, the Messenger, the one who taught mankind good, not a murderous leader who was striving for his own glory and power, intoxicated with victory.

The story of his Companions and the Caliphs after him in their wars and conquests was along the same lines. They applied these principles and did not lose control even during the most intense moments of war. They did not forget their principles in the greatest victories of conquest.

Some of the inhabitants of Lebanon revolted against their governor 'Ali ibn 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās, so he fought them and gained victory over them. He thought it would be wise to separate them and expel a group of them from their homes and send them to other places. This is the least that a ruler would do to them nowadays in the most civilized of nations. But the reaction of Imam al-Awzā'i, the Imam, *mujtahid* (scholar of juristic reasoning) and scholar of Syria was to write a letter to the governor of Lebanon, denouncing him for his action in expelling some of the Lebanese from their villages and punishing those who had not taken part in the rebellion along with those who had taken part. Among the words he wrote to him were the following:

"Among those of *ahl adh-dhimmah*[27] who have been expelled from the mountains of Lebanon are some who did not support those who rebelled, some of whom you killed and some you returned to their villages, as you know. How can you punish the masses for the sins of a few, expelling them from their homes and property, when the ruling of Allah is:

﴿أَلَّا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرَىٰ ﴿٣٨﴾﴾ [سورة النجم: ٣٨]

﴿That no bearer of burdens can bear the burden of another.﴾ *(Qur'an 53: 38)*,

— which is the best ruling to follow and the most appropriate command to heed? The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said,

'Whoever mistreats any non-Muslim who has a treaty with the Muslims, or orders him to do more than he is able, I will be his opponent on the Day of Resurrection.'"[28]

[27] *Ahl adh-dhimmah*: Non-Muslims living under a Muslim state.

So the governor had no option but to let them return to their villages with honour and dignity!

I do not want to comment on this incident. It is sufficient for me to remind people of what the French did when we revolted against them when they were in our country, and what they are doing now to the inhabitants of Arab North Africa,[29] killing tens of thousands wholesale, destroying dozens of towns and villages with their inhabitants still inside, levelling them completely. It is sufficient for me to remind people of the atrocities the British committed in Palestine during the Arab revolts there. This is sufficient to point to what I want to draw attention to, namely the wonders of our civilization in the field of war and conquest.

When 'Umar ibn 'Abdul-'Azīz became the Caliph, some people from Samarqand came to him and told him that Qutaybah, the commander of the Islamic army, had conquered their city and brought Muslims to live there by trickery and in an unlawful manner. So 'Umar wrote to his governor there, telling him to appoint a *qāḍi* (judge) to investigate what they had told him, and if he ruled that the Muslims were to leave Samarqand, then they would have to leave. The governor appointed Jamī' ibn Ḥāḍir al-Bāji as a judge for them, to investigate their complaint, and the judge, who was a Muslim, ruled that the Muslims should leave and that subsequently the leader of the Muslim army should warn them and inform them that there was no peace treaty — in

[28] Hadith narrated by Abu Dāwūd and al-Bayhaqi in their *Sunans*.

[29] The area was under the French rule those days and the people wanted freedom.

accordance with the Islamic principles of warfare — so that the people of Samarqand would be prepared to fight the Muslims without being caught unawares. When the people of Samarqand saw and realized that never before in history had such justice been carried out by a state on its army and the army's commander, they said, "This is a nation which should not be fought, for its rule is a mercy and a blessing." They insisted that the Muslim army stay, and they agreed that the Muslims should live amongst them. Look at this... an army conquers a city and enters it, and the vanquished complain to the conquering state, whose judge rules against the victorious army and commands it to leave and not enter the city again without the approval of its people! Have you ever seen any war in history, ancient or modern, in which the combatants operate according to principles of morality and truth as the armies of our civilization did? I know of nothing among any of the nations of this world that is like this attitude.

When our victorious armies conquered Damascus, Homs and other Syrian cities, they took a sum of money from their people in a peaceful manner, in return for protecting them and defending them. When Heraclius gathered his forces to engage in a decisive battle against them, our leaders thought that they should go out of the conquered cities and gather in one place to fight the Byzantines all together. So our army left Homs, Damascus and the other cities. Khālid gathered the people of Homs, Abu 'Ubaydah gathered the people of Damascus, and the other leaders gathered the people of their respective cities, and told them: we took money from you on the basis that we would protect you and defend you, but now we are leaving you and cannot defend you, so here is your money, which we are returning to you. The people of the cities said: may Allah cause you to return safely and grant you victory, for by Allah your rule and justice is more beloved to us than the

injustice and oppression of the Byzantines. By Allah, if they had been in your place they would not have given back to us anything they had taken, rather they would have taken with them everything that they could carry. Yes, they would have done the same as armies in the modern age do when they are forced to leave a city: they do not leave behind anything that could benefit the enemy. Have you ever heard of such a thing? By Allah, if I did not believe in principles and morality, and that they should prevail, if I was one of those who subjugate principles to political aims as the leaders of the modern age do, I would have said that the leaders of our army had taken the idea of adhering to principles and morals to the degree of naivete. But they were a believing people who hated to say that which they did not do.

During the wars that the Tartars waged against Syria, many Jewish, Christian and Muslim prisoners fell into their hands. Then Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah intervened with the Tartar leader concerning the prisoners and their release. The Tartar leader said that he would free the Muslim prisoners only, not the Christians and the Jews. Shaykh al-Islam rejected that offer and said,

"You have to release all the Jewish and Christian prisoners too, for they are people who are living under our protection, and we will not leave behind any prisoner of our own religion or of the people living under our protection."

Have you heard about the Crusades which the westerners launched against us in the Middle Ages? Have you heard how we kept our word while they broke theirs, how we forgave while they took revenge, how we saved lives while they indulged in slaughter until the blood ran knee-deep, and they felt ecstatic because of that?

When the Crusaders, during the second Crusade, reached Ma'arrat an-Nu'mān, they besieged it until its people were forced to surrender, after they received a promise from the leaders of the campaign that their lives, property and honour would be protected. No sooner had the Crusaders entered the city than they began to commit atrocities that would turn children's hair white. Some European historians who were present during this campaign put the number of people killed, men, women and children, at one hundred thousand! Then the Crusaders moved on to *Bayt al-Maqdis* (Jerusalem) and besieged it. Its people thought that they were defeated and had no way out, so they asked the campaign leader, Tancred, to guarantee their safety and the safety of their property. He gave them his banner to raise over al-Masjid al-Aqṣa, to which they could flee for safety. Then they entered the city, and how terrible and cruel was the massacre they carried out! The inhabitants of al-Quds (Jerusalem) fled to al-Aqṣa, above which they raised the banner of safety, until it was filled with old men, children and women, who were then slaughtered like sheep, and the blood flowed from the mosque until it reached the horses' knees. Everyone in the city was slaughtered, until the streets were filled with crushed skulls, severed arms and legs, and mutilated bodies. Our historians stated that the number of people killed inside al-Masjid al-Aqṣa alone was seventy thousand, including a large number of Imams, devoted worshippers and ascetics, let alone the women and children. The European historians do not deny these atrocities; many of them even speak of them with pride!

Ninety years after this massacre, Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn (Saladin) conquered *Bayt al-Maqdis*, and what did he do? There were more than one hundred thousand westerners in the city, and he guaranteed that their lives and property would be safe. He let them

leave in return for a small amount of money to be paid by those who were able to pay, and he gave them forty days to leave. Eighty-four thousand left and went to join their brothers in Acre and elsewhere. Then he let many of the poor leave without having to pay anything, and his brother al-Malik al-'Ādil paid the ransom on behalf of two thousand of them. He treated the women in a manner unmatched by even the kindest victorious king of the modern age. When the Frankish Patriarch wanted to leave, he let him go, and he took with him the wealth of the churches, the Dome of the Rock, al-Aqsa and the church of the Resurrection, and the value of that wealth is known only to Allah. Some of Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn's inner circle suggested that he should seize that great wealth, but the sultan replied: "I will not betray him." He did not take from him any more than he had taken from each individual. What makes this humane action on the part of Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn even more strange and wonderful is that when he conquered *Bayt al-Maqdis*, he sent along with the masses of westerners who left the city to join their brothers troops to protect them and make sure that they reached the Crusader strongholds in Tyre and Sidon safely, even though he was still at war with them. Can you believe this? Listen to the rest of the story... A large number of women who had paid the ransom gathered and went to plead with the sultan, telling him that they were wives, mothers or daughters of some of the knights and soldiers who had been taken prisoner or killed, and they now had no one to support them and no one to turn to. He saw them weeping and he wept with them, filled with compassion. He issued commands that a search be made among the prisoners for their menfolk, and those whom he found were released and returned to their women. As for those who had lost their husbands, he gave them a lot of money which made them speak highly of him wherever they went. Then he let

those whom he had released go with their wives and children to join their brothers in Tyre and Acre. At the same time, some of the western poor who had left Jerusalem after the conquest had gone to Antioch, where the Crusader ruler refused to accept them. They wandered around, not knowing where to go, until the Muslims gave them refuge. A group of them went to Tripoli, which was under Latin rule, but the Latins threw them out and refused to accept them, and they stole from them the goods that the Muslims had given to them.

The story of Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn and how he treated the westerners during the Crusades is like a legend, and were it not for the fact that the westerners themselves still admire the noble attitude of this immortal hero and his sublime conduct, there would be room to accuse our historians of exaggerating about him. The westerners themselves are the ones who reported that news reached Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn that Richard Coeur de Lion — the greatest and bravest of Crusader leaders — was sick, so Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn sent his own private physician to him, with the medicines and fruits that the Crusader leader could not obtain. This was at the time when war was still raging between them and their armies were in conflict! They are the ones who tell the story of a western woman who threw herself down at the tent of the sultan Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn, weeping and wailing and complaining to him that two soldiers from his army had taken away her child. Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn wept and sent someone to look for the child; when they found him they handed him over to her. Then she was sent to her camp with a guard from his army, to ensure that she arrived safe and sound. What remains to be said after this?

When Sultan Muhammad al-Fātiḥ conquered Constantinople, he entered the church of Aya Sofia, where the men of the church had fled for safety. He received them kindly and reassured them that he would protect them, and he asked the frightened Christians in the church to go back to their homes in safety, then he organized the affairs of the Christians. He gave them the right to follow their own churches and religious laws, and to follow their own customs with regard to their personal affairs. He allowed the priests to elect their patriarch, and they elected Janadius. The sultan celebrated his election in the same splendid manner as such events had been celebrated during the Byzantine period. He told him, you will be the real and valid Patriarch at all times and in all circumstances. You will enjoy the same rights and privileges as your predecessors. Then he gave him a beautiful horse and a special guard of Janissaries (who formed the private guard of the Sultan). The Pashas of the state accompanied him to the place that had been prepared for him, then Sultan al-Fātiḥ announced his recognition of the laws of the Orthodox Church. He put them under his care and he collected or bought all the sacred relics of the saints that had been looted on the day of the conquest and handed them over to the churches and monasteries.

Sultan Muhammad al-Fātiḥ did this without there being any kind of peace treaty or conditions between him and the Christians at the time of the conquest that he was obliged to fulfil. Rather, he offered this protection and care voluntarily, which made them feel afterwards that they were safer and more secure, and had more religious freedom, under the care of the new Islamic state than they had when they were under the rule of the Byzantine state.

The Ottoman Sultans continued to treat their Christian subjects well in the neighbouring countries that they conquered, such as Greece, Bulgaria, etc., in a manner that was unmatched in the rest of Europe at that time. Even the followers of Calvin in

Hungary and Transylvania and the Unitarian Christians in Transylvania, always preferred to be under Turkish rule than to fall into the hands of the Hapsburg dynasty. The Protestants in Silesia longed for Turkish rule and were willing to buy their religious freedom by submitting to Muslim rule. Whilst the Muslims treated the Christians under their rule with this generous attitude of religious tolerance, the Christians in Europe were suffering from the harshness of their rulers and the fanaticism of religious groups against one another, with widespread bloodshed, fear and terror. Listen to what the Patriarch of Antioch, Macarius, said in the seventeenth century about the atrocities which the Polish Catholics carried out against their Orthodox brethren:

"We have all shed many tears for the thousands of martyrs slain during the last forty or fifty years at the hands of those miserable heretics and enemies of the faith (meaning the Catholics). The number of slain may be seventy thousand. What traitors! What filthy demons! What hearts of stone! What did the nuns and women do? What sin did these boys and girls and infants commit that they should kill them? Why do I call them the accursed Poles? Because they have shown themselves to be more savage and more decadent than the corrupt worshippers of idols. That is because of the hard-heartedness they have shown in dealing with the Christians, thinking that they will erase the name of Orthodoxy thereby. May God cause the Turkish state to abide forever, for they take the *jizyah* (tribute) that they have imposed but they have nothing to do with other religions, and they do not care whether their subjects are Christians or Nazarenes, Jews or Samaritans, whereas these accursed Poles are not content only to take taxes and tithes from their Christian brothers, even though they agreed to serve them willingly, rather they subjected them to the control of the oppressive Jews, the enemies of Christ, who did not even allow them to build churches and did not leave alive even one priest who knows the teachings of their religion."

While discussing the respect which Sultan Muhammad al-Fātiḥ showed towards Aya Sofia and the rights of the Christians in Constantinople, I must also mention what the Crusaders did when they came from Europe and took over Constantinople in 1204 CE. Listen to what Pope Innocent III said, describing what they did to their Orthodox brethren:

"The followers of Christ and the supporters of his religion, who should have wielded their swords against the greatest enemy of Christendom (meaning Islam) have shed sacred Christian blood and have swum in a sea of blood. They respect neither religion, age nor sex; they commit adultery in broad daylight. Nuns, virgins and mothers have been subjected to the bestiality of the troops. They are not content with seizing the treasures of the emperor or plundering the wealth of individuals; they have seized the church lands and treasures; they have violated the sanctity of the churches and stolen their ikons, crosses and sacred relics of the saints."

Listen to what the historian Charles Dale says:

"The drunken soldiers entered the church of Saint Sofia, destroying holy books and stepping on the images of the martyrs. A prostitute sat on the throne of the patriarch, raising her voice in song. Works of art have been destroyed, and statues melted down to make coins."

One of the monks who witnessed this tragic event said:

"The followers of Muhammad would not have treated the city as the soldiers of Christ did."

Indeed, the Muslims did not do that when they conquered the city, as we can see from the actions of Sultan Muhammad al-Fātiḥ. Because they were Muslims, they did not stoop to the iniquitous and primitive level of religious prejudice which the Catholics inflicted upon their Orthodox brethren.

I do not want to dwell at length on the comparisons between the attitude of the conquering Muslims in Andalusia and their good treatment of the conquered people, their mercy towards them and the manner in which they took care of their affairs, and what the Spanish did when they took over Granada (the last Muslim kingdom in Andalusia) after they had given the Muslims sixty-odd promises to respect their religion, their mosques, their wealth and honour. They did not keep any of their promises, nor did they refrain from shedding blood, killing people and stealing their wealth. Barely thirty-two years passed after the fall of Granada before the pope issued a command in 1524, ordering that all the mosques in Spain be turned into churches. Barely four years after that, not a single Muslim was left in Spain. See how they kept their promises, and see how we kept ours!

It is strange indeed that their cruelty and breaking of promises to one another was no less than what they did to us. For they were cruel and hard-hearted in every country they conquered, in the east and in the west. They were cruel and hard-hearted with every weak person they defeated, whether Muslim or Christian. They themselves spoke of their cruelty.

The priest Otto al-Duwayli, one of the monks of Saint Denis who was the personal priest of Louis VII and who accompanied

him on the Second Crusade told of some of the things he saw. He said:

"Whilst the Crusaders were attempting to travel by land across Asia Minor to Jerusalem, they were defeated by the Turks in the mountain pass of Fareejiya in 1148. They reached the coastal city of Attalia with great difficulty, from which those who were able to pay the high price demanded by the Greek merchants managed to cross the sea to Antioch, leaving the sick and wounded and masses of pilgrims at the mercy of their treacherous Greek allies. The Greeks had taken the sum of five hundred marks from Louis on the condition that they would supply some guard to protect the pilgrims and to take care of the sick until they recovered enough to travel and join their comrades. But hardly had the army departed the Greeks told the Turks where the unarmed pilgrims were, and they watched silently as hunger, sickness and the arrows of the enemy brought death and destruction to them. A group of three or four thousand tried to escape out of despair, but the Turks who had reached their camp attacked it in order to consolidate their victory, so they besieged them and destroyed them utterly. Those among them who escaped death would have fallen into despair, were it not for the fact that their miserable situation made some of the Muslims take pity on them, so they helped the sick, poor and hungry who were on the brink of death, giving them generous aid. Some of them even bought the Frankish currency that the Greeks had squeezed out of the pilgrims by force or by deceit, and distributed it generously among the needy. There was a vast difference between the compassionate treatment that the pilgrims received from the infidels (meaning the Muslims) and the cruelty that they suffered from their Christian brethren among the Greeks who

forced them to do hard labour, beat them and stole from them what little property they had left. Many of them even embraced the religion of their saviours of their own free will. As the ancient historian said: they hated their brothers in faith who had treated them so harshly, and they found safety among the infidels (the Muslims) who were compassionate towards them. We have heard that more than three thousand people went and joined the ranks of the Turks. Ah, the mercy of the Muslims is worse than treachery! For they gave them bread but they took away their beliefs. Even though it is certain that they never forced anyone among them to change their religion, all they did was to offer some services."

But why should we go so far back in history, when we can see how the attitude of the westerners was in two world wars and their cruelty during those wars? And we can see their attitude in the Arab and Muslim East, which speaks of the extent of their cruelty which is characteristic of their behaviour and rule, and of the extent of their hypocrisy when they declare their humanity and mercy in international organizations, while at the same time they manifest their savagery and cruelty in their wars and in their colonies and the countries which are subjected to their rule. Even if some people try to find excuses for the westerners' atrocities in the Middle Ages by saying that they were a people who were not civilized yet, what is their excuse now, when they are the leaders of civilization and the teachers of the world in the fields of science, art and invention? The issue, in our view, is one of the essential nature which is stronger than any affectation of character. The westerners are still carrying, in their hearts and natures, the characteristics of the days when they were barbaric and idolatrous tribes. These characteristics were hidden behind a facade of religion in the Middle Ages, hence religion was blamed for their

savagery. Now they are hiding behind a civilized facade, so "peace and stability" or "civility and etiquette" are blamed for their cruelty. Throughout the ages they are the same: dwellers of the jungle, shedders of blood, worshippers of power and beasts of fanaticism. How can they talk about our cruelty during our conquests and their mercy during colonialism? By Allah, we and they are as the poet said:

"When we had power over the world, forgiveness was our characteristic.
When they had power, blood flowed freely.
This difference comes as no surprise,
For every vessel leaks the substance that is in it."

CHAPTER SEVEN

Kindness to Animals

This is an interesting aspect of the wonders of our civilization, even though it may not be unusual in the context of the times we are living. For until the modern age, mankind did not think that animals were entitled to any share of kindness or mercy. Some modern nations still entertain themselves by killing animals during their festivals and celebrations, or for sport. Our civilization is distinguished by its principles and its compassion and sensitive, humane feelings which were unknown in any other civilization, before or since, until the present day. This is kindness and compassion towards animals, a mercy which attracts one's attention and generates admiration and surprise. There follow some examples of that.

The first thing that our civilization declares with regard to kindness to animals is that the world of the animals, just like the world of humans, has its own characteristics, nature and feelings:

﴿وَمَا مِن دَآبَّةٍ فِي ٱلْأَرْضِ وَلَا طَٰٓئِرٍ يَطِيرُ بِجَنَاحَيْهِ إِلَّآ أُمَمٌ أَمْثَالُكُم ...

[سورة الأنعام: ٣٨] ﴿٣٨﴾

﴿There is not a moving [living] creature on earth, nor a bird that flies with its two wings, but are communities like you...﴾ *(Qur'an 6: 38)*

Animals are entitled to kindness and mercy just as humans are.

"Those who are merciful will be shown mercy by the Most Merciful."[30]

"Whoever has been given kindness has been given a share of goodness in this world and in the Hereafter."[31]

Mercy towards animals may even earn a person admittance to Paradise:

"Whilst a man was walking on the road, he was overcome with intense thirst. He found a well, so he went down into it and drank, then came out. There he saw a dog which was panting and biting the dust because of thirst. The man said: 'This dog is suffering from thirst as I did.' So he went back down into the well and filled his leather socks with water, then he held it in his mouth and climbed out, then he gave the dog water to drink. Allah appreciated (his action) and forgave him (his sins)." They said: 'O' Messenger of Allah, will we be rewarded for (how we treat) animals?' He said: 'In every living being there is reward.'"[32]

By the same token, cruelty towards animals may lead a person to Hell:

"A woman entered Hell because of a cat which she tied up and did not feed, nor did she let it eat from the vermin of the earth."[33]

[30] Hadith narrated by Aḥmad, Abu Dāwūd, Tirmidhi and al-Ḥākim.
[31] Aḥmad.
[32] Bukhari, Muslim, Mālik, Aḥmad and Abu Dāwūd.
[33] Bukhari and Muslim.

Shari'ah goes even further in enjoining mercy towards animals. It forbids staying too long on an animal's back when it is standing still. The Prophet (ﷺ) said:

"Do not take the backs of your animals as chairs."[34]

Islam forbids starving animals and making them thin and weak. The Prophet (ﷺ) passed by a camel whose belly was sticking to its back (because of hunger), and he said:

"Fear Allah with regard to these dumb animals. Ride them when they are fit and slaughter them and eat them when they are fit."[35]

It is also forbidden to exhaust them by making them do more work than they are able to do. The Messenger of Allah entered a garden belonging to a man from among the Anṣār, in which there was a camel. When the camel saw the Prophet (ﷺ) it moaned and tears flowed from its eyes. The Messenger of Allah came to it and wiped away its tears, then he said,

"Who is the owner of this camel?" Its owner said, "I am, O' Messenger of Allah." The Prophet said to him: "Do you not fear Allah with regard to this animal of which Allah has given you possession? For it has complained to me that you are starving it and exhausting it (i.e., wearing it out by making it work too much)."[36]

It is also forbidden to hunt for mere sport or entertainment.

"Whoever kills a small bird for no purpose, it will raise

[34] Aḥmad and al-Ḥākim.
[35] Abu Dāwūd and Ibn Khuzaymah.
[36] Aḥmad and Abu Dāwūd.

its voice to Allah on the Day of Resurrection, saying, 'O' Lord, So and so killed me for no purpose, he did not kill me for any useful purpose.' "[37]

It is also forbidden to use animals as targets in order to learn how to shoot.

The Messenger of Allah cursed those who take any living being as a target."[38]

It is forbidden to incite animals to fight one another, or to mark their faces by branding or with fire (i.e., marking them so as to distinguish them from other animals). The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) passed by a donkey that had been branded on its face, and he said:

"May Allah curse the one who branded it."[39]

If the animal is one whose flesh may be eaten, then being merciful towards it means sharpening the blade, giving it water to drink before slaughter and waiting for a while after slaughtering before skinning it.

"Allah has prescribed proficiency in all things. So, if you kill, kill well, and if you slaughter, slaughter well. Let each one of you sharpen his blade and let him spare suffering to the animal he slaughters."[40]

Indeed, making the animal lie down for slaughter before sharpening the blade is a form of cruelty that is not permitted. A

[37] Nasā'i and Ibn Ḥibbān.
[38] Bukhari and Muslim.
[39] Ṭabarāni.
[40] Muslim, Abu Dāwūd, Mālik and Tirmidhi.

man made a sheep lie down when he was sharpening his blade, and the Prophet (ﷺ) said to him,

"Do you want to kill it many times? Why don't you sharpen your blade before you slaughter it?"[41]

Listen to this amazing account of mercy towards animals, one of the most eloquent indications of the spirit of our civilization. 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd (رضي الله عنه) said: "We were with the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) on a journey, and we saw a *ḥammarah* (a bird like a sparrow) which had two chicks. We took the chicks, and the bird began to flap its wings. When the Messenger of Allah came, he said,

'Who has made her panic about her children? Give her children back to her.' And he saw an ant colony that we had burnt and he said, 'Who burnt this?' We said, 'We did.' He said, 'No one should punish with fire except the Lord of fire.' "[42]

In the light of these teachings, the Muslim *fuqaha'* issued rulings of kindness towards animals that had never even crossed human minds before. They stated that it is obligatory for an animal's owner to spend on it, and that if he refused he was to be forced to either sell it or spend on it, or to let it go to a place where it could find its food in safety, or to slaughter it if it is an animal whose meat is edible. They even went further than that, as some of them said:

"If a blind cat comes to a person's house, he is obliged to spend on it because it is unable to fend for itself."

[41] Ṭabarāni and al-Ḥākim.
[42] Abu Dāwūd.

They forbade making an animal carry more than it is able to bear, and they imposed legal consequences in the case of one who hires an animal to carry a load or for riding, then makes it carry more than it is able to bear; they said that he is obliged to pay compensation to the animal's owner. They set out the amounts that mules and donkeys are able to carry, and it is interesting to note that one of the *fuqaha'* stated amounts for each that another *faqīh* did not agree with, so he commented on that by saying:

"This is fair for the mule but it is unfair for the donkey."

With regard to damage caused by one animal to another, there are no consequences for the animal itself, for the animal is not punished for any damage that it causes; rather the owner is to be punished if he was careless and failed to look after the animal or tie it up.

These are the principles of kindness to animals in our civilization and laws. But how were these principles applied in real life?

When the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) was on one of his journeys, he heard a woman from among the Anṣār cursing her she-camel which she was riding. He denounced the woman for doing that and said,

> "Take off (the luggage) that is on it and leave it alone, for it is cursed." The she-camel was left to wander among the people, and no one touched it.[43]

'Umar (رضي الله عنه) passed by a man who was dragging a sheep by its leg to slaughter it. He said to him, "Woe to you; lead it to its death in a gentle manner."

[43] *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim.*

Similarly, our civilization applied the principles of kindness to animals and taking care of them at the state level and in social institutions.

With regard to the care of the state, there is no clearer evidence of that than the fact that our Caliphs used to make public announcements telling the people to be kind to animals and not to hurt them or harm them.

In one of his letters to his governors, 'Umar ibn 'Abdul-'Azīz told them to forbid the people to make the horses run for no purpose.

He wrote to the officials in charge of roads (a position similar to that of traffic control today) telling them that they should not allow anyone to use heavy reins on their animals or to hit them with whips that had iron tips.

Part of the job of the *muḥtasib* (an official whose role was similar in some ways to that of a modern policeman) was to stop people from making their animals carry more than they were able to bear, or to torment them or beat them whilst travelling. If he saw anyone doing that, he would discipline him and punish him.

> "The *muḥtasib* should force them to follow the rules because of the interests served by that, so they should not force animals to carry more than they are able to bear, or drive them in a harsh manner when they are carrying loads, or beat them harshly, or make them stand in public areas with loads on their backs. All of these actions are forbidden by the pure shari'ah. They have to remember that Allah is always watching, with regard to feeding their animals, so they should let them eat their fill, and not give them bad quality feed or too little."

With regard to public institutions, animals had a great share of such things. It is sufficient for us to note that in the records of ancient *waqfs* (endowments), we find *waqfs* dedicated to the treatment of sick animals, or to the care of old animals that could no longer work. One example is al-Marj al-Akhḍar (where the Damascus soccer stadium now stands), which was a *waqf* for disabled horses whose owners refused to spend on them because they could no longer benefit from them; they were to be cared for on this land until they died. Another of the *waqfs* of Damascus was for the cats, a place where they were to be fed and cared for, and where they could sleep. Hundreds of fat, well cared for cats used to gather in the house set up by this *waqf*, where they were fed every day and where they stayed, never moving except for exercise.

All of this tells you of the spirit of the people whose kindness towards animals reached such an extent, the like of which is unknown elsewhere. Perhaps the most eloquent example of the spirit of people in our civilization is that of a great *Ṣaḥābi* like Abu ad-Darda' (ﷺ), who had a camel to which he said as he was dying:

"O' camel, do not complain about me to your Lord, for I never forced you to carry more than you were able to bear."

The *Ṣaḥābi* 'Adiyy ibn Ḥātim used to break bread into crumbs for the ants and say, "They are our neighbours and they have rights over us."

The great Imam Abu Isḥāq ash-Shīrāzi was walking down the road with one of his companions, and a dog came up to him. His companion shouted at it to make it go away, but the shaykh told him not to do that, and said to him. "Do you not know that the road is for us and for him?"

We cannot appreciate this outstanding phenomenon in our civilization and its humane stance towards animals, until we realize how animals were treated in ancient and mediaeval societies, and the attitude of other nations in cases where animals caused damage and in cases where animals were subjected to torment.

The first thing that attracts our attention is the fact that we find nothing in the teachings of those peoples that enjoins kindness and mercy towards animals. Hence, we find that the animal had no rights that obliged its owner to spend on it and take care of it.

Moreover, what we notice is that animals would be held accountable if they caused any damage and they would be held responsible for their actions just like an accountable, sane adult. This is one of the strangest features of ancient and mediaeval history, which lasted as long as the nineteenth century, whereby animals would be judged as people are judged, and sentences of imprisonment, expulsion and death might be passed against them just as they might be passed against human criminals.

In the Jewish law it says:

"If a bull gores a man or a woman, and that leads to the death of the person gored, the bull must be stoned and it is forbidden to eat its meat. The owner of the bull is not responsible if the bull was not known for goring. But if the bull was known for goring, and the people had warned the owner but he took no notice, and he neglected it until the bull caused the death of a man or woman, the punishment for the bull is stoning and the punishment for its owner is execution."

There is a second case in which an animal may be punished in Jewish law, and that is when a man or woman engages in bestiality

with an animal, in which case the animal and the man or woman are both to be killed.

According to the laws of ancient Greece: they had a court specifically to pass judgement on animals and inanimate objects that caused the death of a human. This court was called the Bretanoi, which was the name of the place where its sessions were held. Plato mentioned in his book of laws:

"If an animal kills a human being, the family of the slain person has the right to make a claim against the animal in the court. The next of kin may choose the judges from among the farmers. If it is proven that the animal committed the crime, then it must be killed in retaliation, and its carcass thrown outside the city. An exception is made in the case of combat between a human and an animal in the public arena, in which case there are no such consequences. If an inanimate object falls on a human being and kills him, the next of kin of the victim chooses a judge from among his neighbours to pass judgement against the inanimate object that it should be thrown out beyond the city limits."

In their view, the responsibility of animals was not limited to cases of killing; animals were similarly responsible in cases of injury that did not lead to death. If a dog bit a man, the owner of the dog had to hand his animal over to the injured party, muzzled and bound, so that he might take revenge on it in whatever manner he wanted, by killing it, torturing it or whatever. Similarly, an animal could be punished for the crimes of its owner or his family in some cases. If a man was sentenced to death for a crime that he had committed against the religion or the state, he, his family, his animals and his possessions would be subject to a sentence of burning, destruction or confiscation.

Among the ancient Romans a law included a clause that dictated execution of an ox and its owner if, whilst plowing, the ox moved the boundary marker which marked the line between the field being plowed and the neighbouring field. The punishment for a dog that bit a person was that it had to be handed over to the person who had been bitten, for him to do whatever he wanted with it. A similar rule applied in the case of an animal that grazed on grass that did not belong to its owner.

The punishments of animals by the ancient Germans were similar to those among the Romans and Greeks.

In Ancient Persia, the situation was even stranger. If a rabid dog bit a lamb and killed it, or it bit a person and injured him, its right ear would be cut off. If that happened again, its left ear would be cut off. On the third instance, its right foot would be cut off; on the fourth, its left foot, and on the fifth, its tail would be removed.

In Europe, during the Middle Ages, France was the first Christian European nation to adopt the principle, in the thirteenth century, that animals were responsible and could be punished for their crimes by courts that were organized along the same lines as courts that passed judgement on humans. At the end of the fourteenth century, Sardinia adopted similar principles, followed by Belgium in the fifteenth century and Holland, Germany, Italy and Sweden in the mid sixteenth century. Among some of the people of Sicily these principles remained in force until the nineteenth century.

The animal courts of Europe dealt with claims made against the animals by people who had been injured by them, or by the public prosecutor. Then, representatives would speak in defence of the animal criminals. The court might even demand that the animals be detained as a precaution, then judgement would be

passed and the sentence carried out in front of a group of people, just as in the case of humans. The sentence might be one of execution of the animal, by stoning, beheading or burning, or by cutting off some of its limbs before execution. But no one should think that these courts were held in jest as a form of entertainment. Rather, they were quite serious, as is indicated by reports of the reasons why judgement was passed against animals. For example, they said:

> "A sentence of execution is passed against the animal so that justice may be done," or "It is sentenced to hang as a punishment for the bestial crimes that it has committed."

It is interesting to note here that one of the reasons why the Europeans would subject animals to trials is their transgression of natural laws. So the animal would be accused of witchcraft, which was a crime punishable by burning with fire. They used to hold great celebrations when this punishment was carried out on animals. The executioners would bring pieces of wood and place them in the middle of a public square, then they would bring the cats against whom sentence had been passed, each cat in an iron cage. When the time for the execution came, some priests, accompanied by judges, would come, and one of them would step forward, carrying a flaming torch in each hand. Then one of the judges would issue orders that the cats be thrown into the fire, until they were reduced to ashes, as a punishment for practicing witchcraft!

It is worth mentioning, here, some of the most famous animal cases in mediaeval Europe. One of the most interesting and well-known cases is the court of the mice in the French city of Autonne in the fifteenth century. The mice in this town were accused of gathering in the streets in a most disturbing manner. The French

lawyer Chasaney came forward to defend them, and he asked for a delay because the mice were unable to attend, because there were nursing mothers, sick and incapacitated individuals among them, but they would be able to come and attend the court if they were given a delay. The court agreed to postpone the trial until a specific date, but when the time came, the mice did not attend. The lawyer, for the defence, said to the court: the mice wanted to obey your commands and attend court, but they were afraid that they might be harmed by the cats if they came here. The head of the court replied by saying, we have to protect the lives of the accused. The lawyer asked the court to issue orders that all the cats of the town be detained before the mice came through the streets, so that they could feel safe and secure. The court agreed to this request because it was just and fair, and issued orders that the cats and dogs be prevented from walking in the streets so that the mice could be safe when they came to court. But the people of the town refused to carry out these orders, so the court was forced to rule that the mice were innocent because they had been denied the legal means of defence. The lawyer became very famous because of this case, but we do not know if he took any fee from the mice or not. Perhaps his fee was a promise from the mice that they would not eat his books and papers...

One of the strangest animal cases of the Middle Ages was that of the rooster which laid an egg. A claim was made against this rooster in the Swiss city of Basle in 1474, because it had laid an egg, which according to the European custom of the time was a heinous crime, since it was known to them that witches sought roosters' eggs so that they could use them for their devilish purposes. The rooster was brought to court, and its lawyer defended it by saying, how can the rooster be responsible for an event over which it had no control? But the court did not accept

the defending lawyer's point of view, rather it decreed that the rooster be executed, and the reason given was that this would be a lesson to the other roosters!

In 1495, there was another case in France which was one of the strange animal cases. The vineyard owners in the province of St. Julian made a claim against the borer insects, accusing them of destroying the vineyards and destroying their trees, industry and trade. Two of the greatest lawyers undertook to defend the insects, and the case lasted for four years, until in the end the vintners became exasperated with the delay, so they decided to give the insects their own piece of land where they could eat as much as they wanted of the crops and trees!

This is the contrast between our civilization's attitude towards animals and the attitude of other nations. Hence, it becomes clear that our civilization is distinguished by two features which were absent from the nations of the past and from some of the modern nations.

1 - The establishment of public institutions to care for and treat animals, and to guarantee them a safe life when they become weak, sick or old.

2 - Animal courts were unknown in our civilization, because it promoted the idea that animals are not criminally responsible thirteen hundred years before the modern civilization issued the same call. Cruelty towards animals was unknown in our civilization, as was the practice of making animals fight one another, a practice which was officially sanctioned in ancient Greece and Rome, and which is still known in Spain, where bullfights are held amidst great festivities; this is undoubtedly a bestial leftover of the abhorrent practices of the Europeans in ancient and mediaeval times, from which our civilization is free.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Charitable Institutions

Nothing is more indicative of a nation's refinement and qualification to lead the world than the extent of its members' humane tendencies, goodness, kindness and mercy towards all classes of society, and indeed, to all those who live on earth, humans and animals alike. This is the standard by which nations endure and by which their level of civility is measured.

In this field, our ummah reached a pinnacle which no people ever reached before, and which no subsequent nation has reached, yet. In the past, nations only knew of kindness and charity in a narrow sense that did not go beyond institutes and schools. In the modern age, even though the western nations have achieved great things in meeting social needs through social foundations and public institutions, they have not attained the level of doing humane work solely for the sake of Allah, as our ummah did during its time of strength and glory, or even during the period of weakness and decline. Seeking status, fame, reputation or remembrance after death are the greatest motives for westerners in doing acts of charity, whereas the primary motive for our ummah in doing good deeds is seeking the pleasure of Allah, whether people know that or not. We find sufficient evidence of that in the fact that Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn al-Ayyūbi spent all his wealth on charitable works, and he filled Syria and Egypt with charitable institutions such as mosques, schools, *rabats* (hospices for the poor), etc., without his name being recorded on any of them; rather, he set them up in the name of his leaders, ministers, helpers and friends,

This is the ultimate example of acts that are far removed from any influence of whims and desires.

Moreover, the westerners limit the benefits of many of their social institutions to their own people or to their own provinces, whereas our social institutions opened their doors to all people, regardless of nationality, language, country or school of thought.

A third difference is that we established social institutions to do all kinds of good and social work that were unknown among the westerners until today. These are amazing kinds of work that point to the humane tendency of our ummah which is more pure, more comprehensive and more far-reaching than any humane tendency in other nations.

Before we discuss the many kinds of good done by the social institutions in our civilization, we must outline the principles of our civilization in this field, principles which had an effect on the individuals of our ummah and motivated them to set up these institutions in a manner that is unknown in any other nation.

Islam calls for good in a manner that uproots the motives of greed from human souls and does away with the *Shayṭān's* whispered attempts to instill fear of poverty. After urging the Muslims to spend in charity, the Qur'an says:

﴿ٱلشَّيْطَٰنُ يَعِدُكُمُ ٱلْفَقْرَ وَيَأْمُرُكُم بِٱلْفَحْشَآءِ ۖ وَٱللَّهُ يَعِدُكُم مَّغْفِرَةً مِّنْهُ وَفَضْلًا ۗ وَٱللَّهُ وَٰسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٦٨﴾﴾ [سورة البَقَرَة: ٢٦٨]

﴿*Shayṭān* [Satan] threatens you with poverty and orders you to commit *Faḥsha'* [evil deeds, illegal sex, sins]; whereas Allah promises you forgiveness from Himself and bounty, and Allah is All-Sufficient for His creatures' needs, All-Knower.﴾ *(Qur'an 2: 268)*

This call to do good includes everyone who is able to do it; indeed it includes every human being, whether he is rich or poor. The rich man may do good by means of his wealth and status, and the poor may do good with his hand, his heart, his tongue and his actions. There is no person in Islam who cannot be generous in the fields of goodness. The poor complained to the Prophet (ﷺ) that the rich were ahead of them in doing good, because they were giving charity from their wealth, and these poor people had nothing that they could give in charity. The Messenger explained to them that doing good did not just mean spending money; everything that benefitted people was an act of goodness.

> "In every *Tasbīḥ*[44] there is charity; enjoining what is good is charity; forbidding what is evil is charity; removing a harmful thing from the road is charity; reconciling between two people is charity; helping a man onto his mount or hoisting up his goods onto it is charity."[45]

Thus Islam opens the doors of doing good to all people, so that workers, traders, peasants, students, teachers, women, the disabled, the elderly, the blind, the paralyzed, all can do good. Economic circumstances do not prevent anyone from playing his part in spreading goodness in society. Islam takes the humane tendencies of its followers to a new height when it says that good is to be done to all the slaves of Allah, the Almighty, regardless of their religions, languages, countries and nationalities, as the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

"Mankind are all the dependents of Allah, and the most

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[44] Glorifying Allah, the Almighty.

[45] Bukhari and Muslim.

beloved of them to Him are those who are kindest to His dependents."[46]

It can also be translated as:

"The entire creation (mankind etc.) is the dependent of Allah. The most beloved to Him is the one who is most beneficial to them."

Look at how our civilization then addresses the human soul, in a manner that makes good dear to it by pointing out the benefits that the person himself will gain from doing good. Islam tells each person that above all, doing good will benefit the one who does it, for he is the one who will benefit from doing good by being rewarded, loved and praised by Allah.

﴿... وَمَا تُنفِقُواْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَلِأَنفُسِكُمْ ... ﴿٢٧٢﴾﴾ [سورة البَقَرَة: ٢٧٢]

﴿... And whatever you spend in good, it is for yourselves ...﴾ *(Qur'an 2: 272)*

﴿مَّنْ عَمِلَ صَٰلِحًا فَلِنَفْسِهِۦ ... ﴿٤٦﴾﴾ [سورة فُصِّلَت: ٤٦]

﴿Whosoever does righteous good deed, it is for [the benefit of] his ownself...﴾ *(Qur'an 41: 46)*

Man is naturally selfish, putting himself above all else, so the approach of the Qur'an undoubtedly had an effect on them, so the miser became generous and started to give, and distributed money generously among people.

When Allah (ﷻ) revealed the words:

[46] Ṭabarāni and 'Abdur-Razzāq.

﴿مَّن ذَا ٱلَّذِى يُقْرِضُ ٱللَّهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا فَيُضَٰعِفَهُۥ لَهُۥٓ أَضْعَافًا كَثِيرَةً ... ﴿٢٤٥﴾﴾ [سورة البَقَرَة: ٢٤٥]

﴿Who is he that will lend to Allah a goodly loan so that He may multiply it to him many times?..﴾ *(Qur'an 2: 245),*

– a *Ṣaḥābi* whose name was Abu ad-Daḥdāḥ (رضي الله عنه) said,

"Does Allah really ask His slave for a loan, O' Messenger of Allah?" He said, "Yes." He said, "Stretch forth your hand, O' Messenger of Allah," and he asked him to bear witness that he was giving in charity his garden, besides which he owned nothing else, and in which there were seven hundred fruit-bearing palm trees. Then he went back to his wife, who lived with their children in that garden, and told them what he had done, and she and the children left that garden; she said to him: "What a profitable sale you have made, O' Abu ad-Daḥdāḥ!"

When Allah (ﷻ) revealed the words:

﴿لَن تَنَالُواْ ٱلْبِرَّ حَتَّىٰ تُنفِقُواْ مِمَّا تُحِبُّونَ ... ﴿٩٢﴾﴾ [سورة آل عِمرَان: ٩٢]

﴿By no means shall you attain *al-Birr* [righteousness piety, — here it means Allah's reward, i.e. Paradise], unless you spend [in Allah's Cause] of that which you love.﴾ *(Qur'an 3: 92),*

Abu Ṭalḥah al-Anṣāri (رضي الله عنه) said:

"O' Messenger of Allah, the most beloved of my wealth to me is Bayraha' — a well which gave good water — and (I give it) in charity for the sake of Allah, hoping that

it will be stored with Allah. So, O' Messenger of Allah, do with it as Allah shows you." The Prophet (ﷺ) said: "Well done! That is a profitable deal, that is a profitable deal. Freeze the principle (land) and give the fruits in charity."[47]

This act of charity was the first *waqf* in Islam. From here the phenomenon of *waqf* developed, which is what supplied all the social institutions with the financial resources that helped them to fulfil their noble humane missions. The *waqf* was the foundation on which all the charitable institutions in our civilization's history were built. The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) was the first one to set the sublime example to his ummah. He gave as a *waqf* seven gardens which one of the warriors had bequeathed when he died, saying that the Messenger (ﷺ) should dispose of them in whatever manner he wanted. So the Messenger of Allah set them up as a *waqf* for the poor and needy, for *mujāhidīn*[48] and for anyone else who was in need. His example was followed by 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (رضي الله عنه) who gave his land at Khaybar as a *waqf*, and by the *Ṣaḥābah* Abu Bakr, 'Uthmān, 'Ali, az-Zubayr, Mu'ādh and others (may Allah be pleased with them all) all set up *waqfs*, until there was no *Ṣaḥābi* who had not given some of his wealth as a *waqf*. This humane action was revived during the Caliphate of 'Umar, when he gave some land as a *waqf* for the sake of Allah when he was the Caliph, and he called together a group of the *Muhājirīn*

[47] *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr.*
The last sentence is about 'Umar. He had his land share in Khayber which he donated as per this call. The Prophet then told him to freeze the land and give the fruits in charity. Regarding Abu Ṭalḥah the Prophet advised him to distribute it among his close relatives and he did as instructed - ref. Ibn Kathīr, vol. 1, p. 360, Muassasah al-Kutub ath-Thaqafia, 1996. (IIPH)

[48] Fighters in the cause of Allah.

and Anṣār and asked them to bear witness to that. Jābir ibn 'Abdullāh al-Anṣāri said:

"I do not know of anyone among the Companions of the Messenger of Allah who had the means, whether from among the *Muhājirīn* or the Anṣār, and did not give some of his wealth as a *waqf* that was not to be bought, inherited or given away."

Then the Muslims continued to do that, generation after generation, giving land, gardens, houses and crops as *waqfs* for good works, which filled the Islamic society with so many charitable foundations that it is too difficult to list or count them all.

These foundations were of two types: those which were set up by the state and supported by large-scale *waqfs*, and those which were set up by individuals, governors, leaders, rich people, men and women. We cannot list all the types of charitable foundations, but it will be sufficient to list the most important ones.

One of the first types of charitable institutions were the mosques. The people used to compete in building mosques, seeking the pleasure of Allah. The kings even used to compete in the grandeur of the mosques that they founded. It is sufficient for us to note here the amount that al-Walīd ibn 'Abdul-Malik spent on building al-Masjid al-Umawi (the Umayyad Mosque), which one can hardly believe because he spent so much money and used the services of so many men.

Other types of charitable institutions are schools and hospitals, which we will discuss in separate chapters, *insha' Allah*.

Charitable institutions also included khans and inns for travellers who were cut off from their homelands, and other poor

and needy people; hermitages and prayer rooms in which whoever wanted to could stay and devote himself to worship; houses in which the poor and those who had no money to buy or rent a house could stay; fountains which provided water to people on public thoroughfares for free; public "restaurants" (*maṭā'im*) which distributed food — bread, meat, soup and sweets. Some of these institutions existed until very recently, such as the *Takiyah*[49] of Sultan Salīm, the *Takiyah* of Shaykh Muhiy ad-Dīn in Damascus, and the houses of the pilgrims in Makkah, where those who come to visit the House of Allah stay. There are so many of these houses that Makkah is filled with them, and some of the *fuqaha'* ruled that it is not allowed to rent out the houses of Makkah during the days of Ḥajj, because the entire city is a *waqf* that is for the benefit of the pilgrims. Another kind of charitable institution is the digging of wells in the desert, to provide water for flocks, crops and travellers. There were many such wells between Baghdad and Makkah, and between Damascus and Madīnah, and between the capitals of the Islamic states and their cities and villages, so that travellers — in those days — hardly ever faced the danger of going thirsty.

These institutions included posts or guards on the borders, to ward off the danger of enemy attacks. They were set up specifically to guard the borders for the sake of Allah, in which the *mujāhidīn* could find all that they needed of weapons, ammunition, food and drink. All of that had a great effect in warding off the Byzantine attacks during the 'Abbasid period, and the westerners' attacks during the Crusades, against Egypt and Syria. This was accompanied by *waqfs* that provided horses, swords, arrows and other means of jihad to those who were

[49] *Takiyah*: A hospice or home for the disabled or needy.

fighting for the sake of Allah. This had the effect of making the manufacture of war materials popular, and many centres of production were set up in our country, to such an extent that during the Crusades, the westerners would come to our countries – when there was a truce — to buy weapons from us, and the scholars issued *fatwas* stating that it was *ḥarām* to sell weapons to our enemies. Look at the way things have changed now, and how we have become dependent upon the west for our weapons, and they only let us buy them on the basis of conditions that take away our dignity and independence.

There were also *waqfs* that were set up just to give an income to those who wanted to engage in jihad, and to the army when the state was unable to spend on each individual soldier. Hence the path of jihad was made easy for every fighter who wanted to sell his life for the sake of Allah in order to purchase therewith Paradise as vast as the heavens and the earth. Look at how things have ended up, where we devote a single week during which donations are collected to strengthen and equip the army with weapons. If we had true social awareness and sincere faith, we could set up factories to provide our army with weapons and equipment every day, not just one week of the year, until it would become one of the strongest armies and one of the most prepared to face the enemy and defend our homeland.

Social institutions also included those which were set up to repair roads, arches and bridges, and those which were set up for graveyards, whereby a man would donate a large piece of land to be used as a public cemetery.

Some *waqfs* were allocated to purchase shrouds for poor people who died, and to prepare them for burial.

There were amazing charitable institutions that were set up for the purpose of "social security". There were institutions for foundlings and orphans, which arranged for their circumcision and care. There were institutions also for the paralyzed, the blind and the disabled, where they lived and where generous provision was made for all their needs — accommodation, food, clothing and also education.

There were institutions which were aimed at prison reform, raising the standard of prison conditions and providing prisoners with sufficient food to keep them in good health; and institutions which provided the blind and paralyzed with people to take them to places and serve them.

There were foundations which arranged marriage for single young men and women who did not have enough money, or whose guardians did not have enough money, to cover the expenses of marriage or to spend on the *mahr* (dowry). How noble this action was, and how great our need is for such services nowadays!

There were institutions which provided mothers with milk and sugar, which existed long before our modern "Drop of Milk Society" (*Jam'iyyat Nuqṭat al-Ḥalīb*), as well as being purely for the sake of Allah. One of the charitable acts of Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn is that he set up at one of the gates of the Citadel — which remains to this day in Damascus — a tap from which milk was poured, and another from which sugar water was poured, so that mothers could come to them two days a week and take whatever milk and sugar they needed for their children.

One of the most interesting charitable foundations was the *waqf* that provided vessels for children who broke their vessels on their way home. They could come to this foundation and take new

vessels in exchange for the broken ones, then go back to their families as if they had not done anything wrong.

The last type of foundation that we may mention here is those that were set up to treat sick animals, or to feed them and take care of them when they became unable to work, as in the case of al-Marj al-Akhḍar in Damascus, where the city's soccer stadium now stands. It was a *waqf* for horses and other animals that had grown old and were no longer able to work, where they could be cared for until they died.

These are thirty types of charitable foundations that were set up in the shade of our civilization. Can we find any similar example in any of the previous nations? Indeed, can we find an example of some of these in the modern civilization? This is a unique and enduring feature which distinguished our civilization, alone, at the time where the entire world was immersed in negligence, ignorance, backwardness and oppression. It is an unique and enduring feature that alleviated human suffering and pain. What are we doing nowadays? Where are the hands that will wipe the tears of the orphan, tend the wounds of the injured, and consolidate our society in such a manner that all people enjoy security, goodness, dignity and peace?

CHAPTER NINE

Schools and Educational Institutions

In the previous chapter we spoke of the great variety of charitable institutions in our civilization, which is a source of pride because it demonstrates the great effect that the humane tendency had on the members of our ummah. We also promised to discuss the schools and hospitals in a separate chapter. With regard to the schools, they were based on the many *waqfs* set up by rich leaders, scholars, traders, kings and governors. There were large numbers of such *waqfs*; it is sufficient to note that there was no city and no village, throughout the length and breadth of the Muslim world, that did not have numerous schools in which dozens of teachers taught.

The mosque formed the nucleus of school in our civilization. It was not only a place of worship but also a school in which the Muslims learned how to read and write, and learned the Qur'an, sciences of shari'ah, Arabic language and other branches of knowledge. Then the *kuttāb*[50] schools were established next to mosques, which focused on teaching reading and writing, the Qur'an and some Arabic language, mathematics and physical education. The *kuttābs* were similar to modern elementary schools. Because there were so many *kuttābs*, Ibn Ḥawqal counted three hundred *kuttābs* in one city in Sicily. Sometimes a

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[50] Qur'an and lower elementary schools.

single *kuttāb* would have hundreds and thousands of students; it is mentioned in Tārīkh Abi al-Qāsim al-Balkhi that he had a *kuttāb* in which three thousand students studied, and it was such a big school that he had to ride a donkey in order to go around all his students and check on them.

Then the *madrasahs* were established alongside the *kuṭṭābs* and mosques. Study in the *madrasah* was like secondary or higher education nowadays. Tuition was free and was available to all classes of society. Students did not pay any fee for their secondary and higher studies as they are required to do nowadays, and the tuition was not restricted to just one group in society, to the exclusion of others. Rather, the opportunity to learn was available to all people, and the son of a poor man might sit next to the son of a rich man, and the son of a trader next to the son of an artisan or farmer. There were two sections in the *madrasah*: one residential for those who were strangers or whose circumstances did not let them live on what their fathers spent on them, and one non-residential for the students, who wanted to go back to their family homes in the evening. The residential section was also free of charge, and provided the students with food and a place to sleep, study and pray. Hence, each *madrasah* included a mosque, study halls, students' bedrooms, a library, kitchens and bathrooms. Some schools also included a place where students could exercise in the open air. We still have some examples of these schools with which the Muslim world was filled. In Damascus al-Madrasah al-Nooriyah, which was founded by the great hero Noor ad-Dīn al-Shahīd, is still extant. It is located in Souq *al-Khayyāṭīn* (The Tailors' Bazaar) and provides us with a living example of how schools operated during the times of the Islamic civilization. The traveller Ibn Jubayr visited it at the beginning of the seventh century AH, and admired it; he wrote of it:

"One of the most beautiful schools in the world is Madrasah Noor ad-Dīn (may Allah have mercy on him). It is a luxurious palace to which water comes from a great river, then the water flows through rectangular channels until it reaches a large tank in the middle of the building. This is a scene of dazzling beauty."

As time passed, this school began to disintegrate and some of its space was taken away, but there remains the Īwān,[51] *which is a lecture-hall, the mosque, a room for the teachers to rest in — which is like the professors' room in a university college — a house for the head teacher to live in with his family, and accommodation for the students and servants of the school. The school's neighbours confiscated its dining hall, kitchen, pantries and store-rooms. This is a living example of a school in ancient times. We find similar examples in Aleppo in the Sha'bāniyah, 'Uthmāniyah and Khusrawiyah schools, where the students still have rooms in which they live and halls where they study. Previously students were provided meals too. But the situation has changed now. Instead of meals students receive monthly stipend to meet their neccessary expenses.*

The most prominent living example of these schools is the University of al-Azhar, which is a mosque in whose courtyards study-circles are held, and it is surrounded on all sides by rooms called *arwiqah*,[52] in which the students live. Each *riwāq* is named after the country students belong to such as *riwāq* for the Syrians, *riwāq* for North Africans, *riwāq* for Turks, *riwāq* for Sudanese,

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[51] *Īwān*: Recess-like sitting room with a raised floor, usually opening on the main room or courtyard through an arcade.

[52] Sing. *riwāq*; Living quarters of students of the University of al-Azhar, porticos.

and so on. The students of al-Azhar still receive a monthly stipend, receiving tuition for free, from the *waqf* funds set up for seekers of knowledge in al-Azhar.

It is worth mentioning in this context the conditions and salaries of the teachers in these schools. The heads of the schools were among the best and most famous scholars. When we look at the history of the famous scholars we find that they taught such and such institutions. Imam an-Nawawi, Ibn Ṣalāḥ, Abu Shāmah, Taqiy ad-Dīn al-Subki, 'Imād ad-Dīn ibn Kathīr and others taught in the college of Hadith in Damascus. Al-Ghazzāli, al-Shirāzi, Imam al-Haramayn, al-Shāsi, al-Khaṭīb at-Tabrīzi, al-Qazwayni, al-Fayrūzabādi and others taught in al-Madrasat an-Nidhāmiyah in Baghdad, and so on. In the early period of Islam, teachers did not receive any wages for their work, until, as time went by, the civilization became widespread and schools were built with *waqfs* set up to support them. Then teachers were awarded a monthly salary. It is interesting to note what the scholars of Transoxiana did when Nidhām al-Mulk built a school that was famous throughout the region, and gave the teachers a salary. The scholars unanimously denounced this action. They considered it fatal to the cause of learning and education. It amounted to holding the blessings of pure knowledge. They organized a "wake for knowledge" movement. They said that people with lofty ambitions, drive and pure souls had been striving for the sake of knowledge, they sought knowledge because of its noble status and their own pursuit of perfection, but if a salary were to be paid for it, that would attract the ignoble and lazy, and would be the cause of the humiliation and weakening of knowledge. But this point of view did not endure as life and the necessities of civilization developed. The amount of salary paid to teachers varied according to the location, educational institutions, schools and the *waqf*. In

any case the salary was sufficient enough for a teacher to live a life of ease and comfort. This was in addition to other probable remuneration and emolument paid to a teacher to meet his needs and living expenses. Shaykh Najm ad-Dīn al-Khabūshāni was one of the reputed scholars appointed by Sulṭan Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn to teach in his school, aṣ-Ṣalāḥiyah. He awarded him a monthly salary of forty dinars for teaching, ten dinars for supervising the *waqfs* of the school. He also received sixty Egyptian raṭls[53] of bread and two measures of Nile water each day. The salary of the Shaykh of al-Azhar included an amount to be spent on his mule; the amount that he took from the *waqf* funds in the name of his mule was one hundred Egyptian pounds per month in later years, until that was added to his own monthly salary in recent years.

The one testified by the shaykhs alone was qualified to teach in such institution. In the early days of Islam, the shaykh would give his pupil permission to leave his circle and set up his own circle, or he would appoint him to lead his circle after he died. If he did something other than that, he would be subject to criticism and extremely embarrassing questions. In the biography of Abu Yusuf, the chief *qāḍi* (chief justice) at the time of Harūn ar-Rashīd, it says that he fell sick when his shaykh Abu Ḥanīfah was still alive. His shaykh visited him and said to him, "I was hoping that you would take my position after I die." Then Abu Yusuf recovered from his sickness, and he felt proud of himself and over-confident after hearing his shaykh's testimony. So he set up his own circle, separate from his shaykh Abu Ḥanīfah. Abu Ḥanīfah sent someone to him, to ask him five tricky questions, the answers to which required much explanation and precise detail. Abu Yusuf made mistakes in his answers, and he realized his error

[53] Egyptian raṭl = 1 pound = 449.28 grams.

in splitting from his shaykh. He went back to the shaykh's circle and Abu Ḥanīfah said to him: "You wanted to run before you could walk (lit. you wanted to be a raisin before you were an unripe grape). Whoever thinks that he can do without learning, then let him weep for himself." This is how things were at first. When schools became widespread, those who graduated from them would be given academic *ijāzahs* (licenses) issued by the shaykh of the school, similar to the degrees issued nowadays. Doctors would not be permitted to practise medicine until after they had obtained such a license from the senior doctors of the school.

Teachers had a special symbol which distinguished them from other professionals. At the time of Abu Yusuf, their symbol was a black turban and *ṭaylasān* (shawl-like garment worn over the head and shoulders). At the time of the Fāṭimids, their symbol was a green turban and a golden suit composed of six pieces, the most important of which were the *qalansuwah* (cap) and *taylasān*. With regard to the *jubbah* (cloak) being worn only be scholars and teachers, this tradition began at the time of the Umayyads. The clothing worn (by academics) in Andalusia was somewhat different from that worn by scholars and teachers in the east, the most important distinction being the fact that the Andalusians wore small turbans, and in some instances the scholars did not wear a turban at all. When Abu 'Ali al-Qāli, the famous linguist from the east, arrived in Andalusia and was met by the scholars there, people were astonished to see him wearing a large turban on his head, and some children and foolish people threw stones at him, mocking and denouncing him. The westerners adopted the dress of the schools of Andalusia, and this is the origin of the academic dress known in the universities of Europe nowadays.

Teachers had their own guild (*niqābah*), like the guilds of the *Ṭālibiyīn* [descendents of 'Ali ibn Abi Ṭālib (ﷺ)], the Sharifs

[descendents of the Prophet (ﷺ)] through Ḥasan ibn 'Ali and the guilds to which some professionals and artisans belonged at that time. The teachers themselves elected the head of the guild, and the sultan did not get involved unless there was some dispute among the members, in which case he would bring about reconciliation between them.

Abu Shāmah narrated in *ar-Rawḍatayn* that Muqallid ad-Dawla'i said:

"When al-Ḥāfidh al-Murādi died, our group of Arab and Kurdish *fuqaha'* was split into two factions. Some of us favoured following the *madhhab*, and wanted to appoint Shaykh Sharaf ad-Dīn ibn Abi 'Aṣrūn as head of our guild. Others more inclined towards philosophy and debate, and wanted to appoint al-Quṭb an-Nisapūri. There arose *fitnah* (trouble) among the *fuqaha'* because of that. Noor ad-Dīn heard about that, so he called together a group of *fuqaha'*, then he sent out Majd ad-Dīn ibn ad-Dāyah as his deputy, to tell them: we only wanted to build schools in order to spread knowledge and fight *bid'ah* (innovation), and what has happened amongst you is not good and is not appropriate. Our master (meaning Noor ad-Dīn) says: we approve of both factions, so we appoint both shaykhs. So they were both appointed, with Sharaf ad-Dīn being put in charge of the school that bears his name, and Quṭb ad-Dīn being put in charge of Madrasah an-Nafari."

This is how the schools were, especially the institutes of higher education. The cities of the Muslim world, from one end to the other, were filled with schools. History mentions with pride many Muslim governors who played major role in building schools in the various regions. One of them was Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn al-

Ayyūbi, who built schools in all the cities that came under his rule, in Egypt, Damascus, Moṣul and Jerusalem. Another such ruler was Noor ad-Dīn ash-Shahīd, who in Syria alone, built fifteen institutes, six in Damascus, four in Aleppo, two in Hamah, two in Ḥomṣ and one in Ba'labek. Another was Nidhām al-Mulk, the great Seljuk vizier, who filled Iraq and Khurasān with schools, until it was said that he had a school in every city of Iraq and Khurasān. He used to build schools even in remote places: he built a large and beautiful school on the island of Ibn 'Amr (Madagascar). Every time he found a scholar who was distinguished by deep knowledge, he would build a school for him, set up a *waqf* to support it and establish a library for it. The Nidhāmiyah in Baghdad was the first and most important of the Nidhāmi schools, in which the most famous Muslim scholars taught from the fifth to the ninth centuries AH. The number of students in this school reached six thousand, including the sons of the greatest prominent figures in the kingdom and the sons of the poorest artisans, all of them studying for free; in addition to all that, the poor students would be given something extra from the funds set up for that purpose.

In addition to these great men, rulers, rich men and traders would compete in building schools and setting up *waqfs* to support them and ensure that they would survive and that students would come to them. There were very many who turned their own houses into schools, making their contents, including books and other property, into *waqfs* to support the students who came to study there. Hence, the number of schools grew, especially in the east, to huge proportions. The Andalusian traveller, Ibn Jubayr, was astonished when he saw the large number of schools in the east and the great income they derived from their *waqfs*. He called upon the people in the *Maghreb* (i.e., North Africa and Islamic Spain) to travel to the east to seek knowledge. He said:

"There are many waqfs to support students in the lands of the east, especially Damascus. Anyone among the people of the Maghreb who desires success should travel to these lands, where he will find many things that will help him to seek knowledge, foremost among which is not having to worry about earning a living."

The testimony of Ibn al-Jubayr is valuable, because he was a traveller who was known to be honest and truthful in what he said. Ibn Jubayr singled out Damascus for its large number of schools and *waqfs*, and it remained like that for a long time during our history. The schools of Damascus, to which students came from all directions, numbered more than four hundred, so that if a foreign student came to Damascus, he could, theoretically, stay there for one year and he would not be able to spend more than one night in each school.

Ibn 'Asākir mentioned in his *Tārīkh* (History) a poem written by Sulṭān ibn 'Ali ibn Munqidh al-Kaṭṭāni, which describes Damascus and its virtues, including its schools.

There follow examples of the large numbers of *waqfs* which were set up to benefit the schools. *Waqfs* were set up to support al-Madrasah an-Nūriyyah al-Kubra in Damascus, as is inscribed on the door of the school. These *waqfs* were as follows: all the new bathhouses in Souq al-Qamḥ (the wheat market); the two new bathhouses in al-Warrāqah, outside Bāb as-Salāmah, and the neighbouring house; the garden of al-Wazīr; three quarters of the garden of al-Jawzah in al-Arzah; eleven stores outside Bāb al-Jābiyah, and the courtyard attached to them on the eastern side; nine fields in Dāriya.

The *waqfs* which were set up for the an-Nūri hospital in Aleppo were as follows: the village of Ma'arata; half of the farm of Wādi al-'Asal near Jabal Sam'ān; five acres of the farm of Kafartāba; one-third of the farm of al-Khālidi; the mill in al-Maṭakh; one-eighth of the mill outside Bāb al-Jinān; eight acres of the farm of Abu Marāya in Gharāz (or the name may be I'zāz); five acres of the farm of al-Ḥumayrah in al-Maṭakh; twelve acres of the farm of al-Farzal in al-Ma'arrah; one third of the village of Bayt Rā'eel in al-'Azbayāt; ten shops in Souq al-Hawā'; lands outside Bāb Anṭākiya, Bāb al-Faraj and Bāb al-Jinān.

We find sufficient evidence of the large number of *waqfs* for the schools and mosques of Damascus, in particular, in the fact that Imam an-Nawawi (d. 676 AH) never ate from the fruits of Damascus in his life, because most of the Ghuṭah (the fertile oasis on the south side of Damascus) and its gardens were *waqfs* that had been confiscated by evildoers.

There were schools for various purposes. Some schools were for teaching the Qur'an, *tafsīr* (exegesis), memorization and recitation of the Qur'an. There were schools especially for the study of hadith. There were schools for teaching fiqh — which were the majority of schools; each *madhhab* has its own schools. There were schools of medicine. There were schools for orphans; an-Nu'aymi, one of the scholars of the tenth century AH, mentioned in his book *ad-Dāris fi Tārīkh al-Madāris* the names and *waqfs* of the schools of Damascus, from which we learn that in Damascus alone there were seven Qur'an schools, sixteen hadith schools, three schools teaching the Qur'an and hadith together, sixty-three schools teaching Shāfa'i fiqh, fifty-two schools teaching Ḥanafi fiqh, four schools teaching Maliki fiqh, and eleven schools teaching Ḥanbali fiqh. This is in addition to the

schools of medicine, rabats, inns, *zāwiyahs*[54] and mosques, all of which were also schools in which people learned. On the contrary, during the same period, the westerners were in a state of absolute ignorance and widespread illiteracy, where knowledge had no refuge except in the monasteries, where it was restricted to the men of the priesthood only. We can realize the great things that our civilization achieved at the peak of its glory, and what amazing things our civilization achieved in the field of social foundations and academic institutions, what a great role Islam played in spreading knowledge and raising the level of education and making its means available to all people.

Ibn Kathīr said in *al-Bidāyah wan-Nihāyah*, concerning the events of 631 AH:

"In this year, construction of al-Madrasah al-Mustanṣiriyah in Baghdad was completed, a school the like of which had never been built before. It was devoted to the study the four schools of fiqh, with sixty-two *fuqaha*, four teaching assistants and one teacher for each *madhhab*, a shaykh of hadith, two Qur'an reciters and ten listeners, a shaykh of medicine, and ten Muslims who were working in medicine, and a library for orphans. Enough bread, meat, sweets and money were allocated to ensure that each person had ample provision... *Waqfs* of libraries were established, the like of which had never been heard of as regards their size, and the beauty and number of the books endowed to them."

[54] Small mosques or prayer rooms (in N. Africa), a small copolaed mosque erected over tombs of Muslim saints with teaching facilities and a hospice attached to it, usually the establishment of a religious orders.

CHAPTER TEN

Hospitals and Medical Institutions

One of the principles on which our civilization is based is striking a balance between the needs of the body and the needs of the soul. Our civilization believes that taking care of the body and its needs is essential for man to achieve happiness and spiritual enlightenment. Among the words which formed the basis of this civilization are the words of the Prophet (ﷺ):

"Your body has rights over you."[55]

It may be noted that the acts of worship in Islam achieve one of the most important aims of medical science, which is the preservation of good health.[56] Prayer, fasting, Hajj and the essential parts and pillars of these acts of worship all protect physical good health and energize the body and restore its strength. If we add to that the fact that Islam seeks to resist disease and prevent its spread, and encourages us to seek appropriate treatment, we will realize what a strong foundation our civilization is built on in the field of medicine, and how much the world has benefitted from our civilization in the establishment of hospitals and medical institutions, and its production of doctors from whose contributions to science in general and to medicine in particular humanity is still benefitting.

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[55] Bukhari and Muslim.

[56] 'Ali ibn 'Abbās defined medicine as the science which seeks to preserve good health for the healthy and to restore it to the sick.

The Arabs knew of the medical school of Jundisapoor which was established by Chosroes (Khusraus) in the mid sixth century CE, from which some of their doctors graduated, such as al-Ḥārith ibn Kaldah, who lived at the time of the Prophet (ﷺ), and to whom he used to tell his Companions to go for treatment when they fell sick. At the time of al-Walīd ibn 'Abdul-Malik the first hospital in Islam was built, which was devoted especially to care for lepers. He appointed doctors to care for them and gave them salaries, and issued orders that they be quarantined and not allowed to go out, and he granted stipends to the lepers and to the blind. Then hospitals were established one after another and were known by the name of *bīmāristān* or *daur al-marḍa*.

The hospitals were of two types, mobile and stationary. With regard to the mobile hospitals, the first such hospital known in Islam was at the time of the Prophet (ﷺ), during the campaign of al-Khandaq, when a tent was set up for the wounded. When Sa'd ibn Mu'ādh was struck in the medial arm vein (which is the vein used for bloodletting or venesection), the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

> "Put him in the tent of Rufaydah so that he will be close to me and I can visit him."

This was the first mobile war hospital in Islam, then such hospitals became widespread during the times of the Caliphs and kings, until mobile hospitals became equipped with all the things that the patient would need of medicines, food, drink, clothes, doctors and pharmacists. The hospital would move from village to village in regions where there were no stationary hospitals. The vizier 'Eesa ibn 'Ali al-Jarrāḥ wrote to Sinān ibn Thābit, who was in charge of the hospitals in Baghdad and elsewhere, saying:

> *"I thought about those who are in the villages, for there is no village in which there are not sick people who have no doctors to take care of them because there are no doctors in the villages. So send some doctors and a store of medicines and potions, to go around among the villages and stay in each area for as long as they are needed to treat the people there, then move on to another village."*

Some of the mobile hospitals during the time of the Seljuk sultan Maḥmoud were so huge that they needed forty camels to transport them.

With regard to stationary hospitals, many of them were in the cities and capitals, and even small towns in the Muslim world, at that time each had one or more hospitals. In Cordoba alone there were fifty hospitals.

The hospitals were of various kinds. There were hospitals for the army, run by specialist doctors, apart from the doctors of the Caliphs, leaders and governors. There were hospitals for prisoners, in which the doctors would go around every day and treat the sick prisoners with the necessary medicines. One of the things that the vizier 'Ali ibn 'Eesa ibn al-Jarrāḥ wrote to Sinān ibn Thābit, the head doctor of Baghdad, was:

> *"I thought about the issue of those who are in jail, and that because their numbers are so large and the places in which they stay are so rough, many of them get sick. We should appoint doctors for them, to visit them every day and give them medicines and potions; these doctors should go around to all the prisons, treating the sick people there."*

There were also emergency stations which were set up near the mosques and public places where people usually crowded together. Al-Maqrīzi tells us that when Ibn Ṭolūn built his famous

mosque in Egypt, he built a place for *wuḍū'* (ablution) in the back of it, and a pharmacy which contained all kinds of medicines and potions; there were servants to look after it, and a doctor would be present on Fridays, to treat worshippers who fell sick.

There were also public hospitals, which opened their doors to treat the masses. They were divided into two separate sections, one for the males and one for the females. Each section had numerous wards, each ward for a certain kind of disease. So there were wards for internal diseases, for the eyes, for wounds, for broken limbs and orthopaedics, and for mental disease. The internal diseases ward was further divided into rooms, with a room for fever, a room for diarrhoea, and so on. Each section had doctors, with a doctor in charge, so there would be a head of internal diseases, a head of surgeons and orthopaedics, a head of eye doctors, etc. Each section had a general head who was called *sā'ūr*, which was a title given to the head doctor in the hospital. The doctors used to work in shifts, with each doctor having an allocated time when he was obliged to stay in his ward and treat the sick. Each hospital also had a number of cleaners, both men and women, and nurses and assistants, all of whom had set, generous salaries. In each hospital there was a pharmacy called *khazānat ash-shirāb* (potions store) in which were kept all kinds of potions, treatments, exotic jams, different kinds of medicine, and top-quality perfumes which were not found anywhere else; there were also surgical instruments and glass and china vessels etc, such as could only be found in the store rooms of kings.

The hospitals were also medical institutions; in every hospital there was a large hall for lectures, where the senior doctors would sit with other doctors and students, with instruments and books beside them. The students would sit in front of their teacher, after

he had finished checking on the patients and treating them, and the teacher and students would discuss medical matters and read from medical books. Often the teacher would bring his students with him inside the hospital, to give them practical lessons on treating the sick, as happens nowadays in the hospitals that are attached to medical colleges. Ibn Abu Uṣaybi'ah — who is one of those who studied medicine in the an-Noori hospital in Damascus — said,

> "I used to go around with the doctor Muhadhdhab ad-Dīn and the doctor 'Imrān when they treated inpatients[57], then when we finished, I would sit with Shaykh Raḍiy ad-Dīn ar-Raḥbi to learn how to diagnose diseases, and I discussed a lot of diseases and their treatment with him."

A doctor was not allowed to set up in practice on his own until he took an exam before the senior scholars of the state, where he would present a thesis in this field in which he wanted a license to practise; this would either be a thesis that he had written himself, or a commentary he had written on a book written by one of the senior medical scholars. He would be examined and questioned about everything that had to do with this field. If he answered well, the senior doctor would give him a license which would permit him to practise the profession of medicine. In 319 AH/ 931 CE, during the reign of the Caliph al-Muqtadir, it was agreed that some doctors had made a mistake in their treatment of a man who had then died, so the Caliph issued orders that all the doctors of Baghdad should be examined afresh. They were tested by Sinān ibn Thābit, the senior doctor of Baghdad. The number of doctors in Baghdad alone was eight hundred and sixty-odd; this is apart from the number of famous doctors who were not examined, and apart from the doctors of the Caliph, viziers and governors.

[57] Sick admitted and staying in the hospital for treatment.

We should not omit to mention that attached to every hospital there was a library filled with books on medicine and other sciences which the doctors and their students needed. It was said that in the hospital of Ibn Ṭulūn in Cairo there was a library which contained more than one hundred thousand volumes on all branches of science.

With regard to the system for being admitted to the hospital, it was free for everyone, with no distinction between rich and poor, stranger or local resident, clever or dull-witted. The sick person would first be examined in the outer ward. If a person was only mildly sick, a prescription would be written for him, and he would go to the hospital pharmacy to have the prescription made up. If a person's sickness warranted admission to the hospital, his name would be written down and he would enter the bathroom where he would take off his clothes, which would be put in a special store. Then he would be given special hospital clothes, and he would enter the ward that was devoted to people with the kind of sickness that he was suffering. He would be given his own bed, with fine linens and covers, and he would be given the treatment that the doctor had specified for him, and the food that would restore him to good health, in the amounts specified. The food given to the sick included lamb, beef, poultry and chicken, and the sign of recovery was that the patient would eat a whole loaf of bread and a whole chicken in one sitting. When the patient reached the final stage of recovery, he would be admitted to the recovery ward where, once he was fully recovered, he would be given a new set of clothes and an amount of money that would be sufficient for him until he was able to start working again. The rooms of the hospital were clean, with running water, and its wards were fitted with the finest furnishings. Every hospital had inspectors who would check on cleanliness, accountants to take

care of its financial affairs, and often the Caliph or governor himself would check on the sick and supervise their good treatment.

This was the system that prevailed in all the hospitals that were established in the Muslim world, whether in the west or in the east, in the hospitals of Baghdad, Damascus, Cairo, Jerusalem, Makkah, Madīnah, the Maghreb and Andalusia. We will limit ourselves to describing four hospitals in four cities that were capitals of Islam during those times.

1. The 'Aḍadi Hospital in Baghdad. This was built by 'Aḍad al-Dawlah ibn Bawayh in 371 AH, after ar-Rāzi, the famous doctor, chose its location by placing four pieces of meat in four places in Baghdad at night; in the morning, he looked for the piece that smelled the best, and that determined the place where the hospital was subsequently built. Then the hospital was built there and a huge amount of money was spent on it. Twenty-four doctors were appointed to work in the hospital, and it was supplied with all that it needed of a scientific library, pharmacy, kitchens and stores. In 449 AH, the Caliph al-Qā'im bi Amrallah renovated this hospital and gathered potions, medicines and drugs that were very rare. He placed therein beds and covers for the patients, medicinal perfumes, beds, employees, doctors and cleaners; the hospital had gatekeepers and guards, and bathrooms. Next to it there was a garden containing all kinds of fruits and vegetables, and boats on its lake that transferred the weak and poor. The doctors worked in shifts morning and evening, and some of them would stay there on night shifts.

2. The Noori Hospital in Damascus. This was built by the just ruler and king Noor ad-Dīn ash-Shahīd in 549 AH/ 1154 CE, using money that he had taken as a ransom for one of the Frankish

kings. When he built it, it was one of the most beautiful hospitals that had ever been built in the entire land. He stipulated the condition that it be for the poor and needy, but if the rich needed any of the medicines that were in it, he would let them have them. All the potions and medicines were freely available to anyone who wanted them. The traveller Ibn Jubayr entered this hospital in 580 AH. He described how the doctors took care of the sick, examining them and preparing the medicines and foods that they needed. There was a section that was especially for mental sickness, where the insane were tied with chains whilst they were treated and fed. One of the historians mentioned that in 831 AH a non-Arab, man of good manners and refined taste, visited Damascus, and when he entered the Noori Hospital and saw how many doctors there were, how well they cared for the sick, and the innumerable good foods and nice things there were in the hospital, he wanted to test the knowledge of the doctors. So he pretended to be sick, and he stayed for three days. The head doctor came and checked on him frequently, and when he checked his pulse he realized that he was not sick, and that he just wanted to test the doctors. So he prescribed for him good food, fat chickens, sweets, potions and all kinds of fruits. Then after three days, he wrote him a message in which he said, "For us, hospitality lasts for three days..." From this the foreigner knew that they had figured out what he was doing, and that they had been giving him hospitality in the hospital all that time.

This hospital continued its great work until 1317 AH, when the al-Ghuraba' Hospital was founded. This is the hospital which is currently supervised by the Medical College of the Syrian University. So the Noori Hospital was closed down, and the building was used as a private school.

3. The Manṣūri Hospital, also known as the Qalāwūn Hospital. This was a house belonging to some governor, which the king al-Manṣūr Sayf ad-Dīn Qalāwūn turned into a public hospital in 683 AH/1284 CE. A *waqf* was set up to provide it with one thousand dirhams each year, and attached to it there was a mosque, a school and a library for orphans. They said that the reason why it was built was that the king al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn, when he was leading the campaign against the Romans, during the days of adh-Dhāhir Baybars in 1275 CE, fell sick in Damascus. The doctors treated him with medicine taken from the great Noori hospital, and he recovered. Then he went to see the hospital for himself, and he was impressed, so he vowed to Allah that if he were to become king, he would build a hospital like it. So when he became sultan, he bought this house and turned it into a hospital, and it was one of the miraculous wonders of the world in its system and organization. He allowed all people to enter it and benefit from it, male and female, free and slaves, kings and subjects. When sick people recovered and left the hospital, they were given new clothes, and whoever died there would be prepared, shrouded and buried. The doctors were appointed to work in various fields of medicine, and cleaners and servants were employed to serve the patients, make the place nice and clean for them, wash their clothes and help them to bathe. Each patient had two people to serve him, and each patient were given a bed with a full set of bedding. Each group of patients were given their own space, in which there was a place for the head doctor to sit and give lessons in medicine to his students. One of the most marvellous things about this hospital was that its benefits were not limited to the sick who were hospitalized and staying there; rather anyone who was not hospitalized and staying at home could ask for whatever potions, foods and medicine he needed. The humanitarian service

of this hospital was so great that one of the eye doctors (ophthalmologists) who worked there said that every day he used to treat four thousand people, including patients who had been admitted, those who were recovering and those who were being discharged. No one who had recovered from his sickness left the hospital until he had been given new clothes and money to spend on his needs so that he would not be forced to do hard work straight after leaving the hospital.

Another of the wonders of this hospital was that it was stated in the *waqf* contract that food was to be given to each patient on his own plate which was not to be used by any other patient; it was to be covered and brought to the patient.

Another of the wonders of this hospital is that the patients who suffered from insomnia could go to a separate hall where they could relax by listening to beautiful music, or by listening to stories recounted by the story-tellers. For those who were recovering, amusing plays were put on, or displays of folk-dancing (which was known to the peoples of the villages). The *muadh-dhins* (callers to prayer) in the mosques attached to the hospital would give the call to prayer two hours before the time of *Fajr* prayer, and sing *nashīds* (songs / hymn) in melodious voices to reduce the pain felt by those who could not sleep.

These customs continued until the time of the French invasion in 1798 CE. The French scholars saw that with their own eyes and wrote about it. This was a treatment which has only been discovered in the west in recent years.

This reminds me of the things I used to read about the city of Tripoli, where an unusual *waqf* was set up to employ two people to walk through the hospitals every day and speak quietly to one another in the patients' hearing, remarking on their improvement

and good colour, etc.

We think it is useful to quote the texts of the *waqf* set up for this great hospital, as mentioned by the author of *Tārīkh al-Bimāristānāt fil-Islam* (History of Islamic Hospitals):

"The best reward you get is by undertaking serious and difficult tasks which could produce a lot of rewards. This is what every negligent person should make the most of. The best that anyone could aim for is that which brings a lot of benefits and a lot of pleasure, that benefits the first generation and continues to grow in strength as the years go by. That is *waqfs* whose benefits reach everyone and whose reward is everlasting; its benefits are great and it brings the reward of Paradise, and brings a person closer to the pleasure of the Most Merciful. This charity is the dowry of *al-Ḥūr al-'Iyn* and this spending brings a great treasure of reward. It is no secret that it brings a great deal of joy to the sick and poor, and it brings happiness to broken hearts. It makes them independent of means by giving them refuge and treatment, the reward for which cannot be expressed. So glad tidings to the one who has made a deal with his Lord, the Almighty, the Most Forgiving, the One Who is always watching him and knows his innermost secrets and thoughts, for he has given Him a goodly loan, according to his means and abilities. By attaining this reward he is a victor, for he has helped the poor Muslim by alleviating his pain and treating his sickness, and his help will save him tomorrow from the punishment of his Lord, the Creator. The hope is that it will give him a great status before Allah (ﷻ) and will bring him close to Him so that he will not fear any injustice or deprivation (of his reward) *(Qur'an 20: 112)*, and that it will give him good deeds that will leave him with no distress

of sin. When our master, the king and sultan al-Manṣūr, the knowledgeable and just, came to know of that, he issued his noble command that the *waqf* of the al-Manṣūri hospital should be set up. (Here the *waqf* contract gives the description and location of the hospital, and its other resources). It has been set up to treat the sick Muslims, men and women, rich and poor, in Cairo and its outskirts, those who live there and those who come from the various regions and provinces of Egypt, of all different types, with all kinds of sickness and afflictions, whether they are major or minor, similar or different, or diseases of the faculties, whether obvious or hidden, or disturbances of the mental faculties, the preservation of which is one of the most important things that man needs, by means of medicines and drugs that are known to the medical experts. People enter the hospital in flocks or individually, old and young, adults and children, women and infants. The sick among the poor, men and women alike, stay there to receive treatment until they recover. They are given the things that are prepared for their medical treatment, which is distributed to those who come from near and far, to local people and strangers, to the strong and the weak, low class and high class, important figures and insignificant people, rich and poor, subjects and rulers, blind and seeing, inferior and superior, famous and unknown, noble and ignoble, those who live a life of luxury and those who have little, master and slave, with no condition of payment and no objection to the fact that there is no payment. Rather it is all done purely for the sake of Allah and in the hope of receiving His reward and bounty, by spending on those who take care of the sick, be they doctors, eye-doctors, surgeons, those who make medicinal potions and foods, those who manufacture ointments, eye-drops,

medicines and laxatives, both simple and compound, and on those who take care of the place, cleaners, storekeepers, secretaries, workers and others who usually do these jobs, and on whatever is needed to treat the sick of food, drink, eye-drops, suppositories, ointments, creams, potions, simple and compound medicines, furniture, pots and instruments that are prepared for the benefit of the sick.

The one who is in charge of the income generated by this *waqf* buys whatever is needed by the sick every day of herbs, clay vessels for their food, glass cups and vessels for their potions, oil for cooking, water from the blessed Nile for their drink and food, and so on, to cover their food when it is taken to them. Money is also to be spent on fans for them to use when it is hot. The one who is in charge of this *waqf* is to spend on these things from the income generated by the *waqf*, without being either extravagant or stingy, and without spending more than is necessary. All of that is to be done according to what is needed, so as to earn more reward. The one who is in charge of this *waqf* should hire two Muslim men who are known to be religiously committed and trustworthy, one of them to be in charge of the store of items to be given out to patients, so he will be in charge of distributing the potions, eye-drops, herbal remedies, ointments and creams, taking permission from the doctors to distribute these things. The other will be given the glass bottles of potions that are prescribed for the sick and the mentally ill, men and women, who are staying in the hospital, and he will distribute them every day and every night, giving each patient whatever has been prescribed. Food is to be cooked in the hospital, chicken, meat and other things. The food that has been cooked for each patient will be placed on a tray for his exclusive use, that is not shared with any other

patient, then covered and brought to the patient, until all the patients have been fed and each of them has been given whatever has been prescribed for him, morning and evening.

The one who is in charge of the income generated by this *waqf* spends on those whom he appoints to work in this hospital of Muslim doctors, eye doctors and surgeons, according to the amount of time they work and the needs of the sick. He is the one who decides about the equipment and about their pay, so long as he is neither stingy nor extravagant with regard to that. The doctors deal with the sick and mentally ill, both men and women, who are in the hospital, working all together or taking shifts as agreed amongst themselves, or by permission of the one who is in charge. They ask the patients how they are and what is new with them, whether they are getting better or getting worse, and they prescribe whatever each patient needs of food, drink, etc. on a piece of paper so that the patient may have the prescription made up. They are obliged to stay in the hospital overnight, either all together or in shifts. The eye doctors stay there every morning to treat the eyes of those in the hospital who are suffering ophthalmic diseases, and they treat any Muslim who comes to them, so that no Muslim who is suffering an eye disease will be turned away. They are very gentle in their treatment of those who are suffering eye diseases. If there is any patient who has pus in his eyes or any condition that requires him to consult with a general practitioner who refers him to the specialist who treats him in consultation with the general practitioner who checks on his condition while he is recovering.

The one who is in charge of this *waqf* spends on the one whom he appoints as a shaykh to research on all aspects of medical science. This shaykh sits in a specific large room as designated

in the *waqf* contract, to study the various specialties of medicine at the times specified by the person in charge of the *waqf* as he sees fit, so that the number of doctors in the hospital will not be too great. The one who is in charge of the income of this *waqf* employs cleaners, both men and women, to work in the hospital, paying each as he sees fit, according to his work, which is to serve the sick and the mentally ill, both men and women, in this hospital, washing their clothes, cleaning their rooms, taking care of their affairs in an appropriate manner.

The one who is in charge of this *waqf* spends whatever is needed to shroud those who die in the hospital. He spends what is needed to wash them and to buy the shroud and perfumes used when washing the deceased, to pay those who wash them, dig their graves and bury them in their graves according to the Sunnah of the Prophet (ﷺ) and in an appropriate manner. If a person is sick in his own house and is poor, the one who is in charge of this *waqf* may spend on whatever this patient needs of potions, medicines, ointments, etc, from the income of this hospital, without deducting the cost from what is allocated for inpatients. If that person dies among his family, the one who is in charge of the *waqf* spends on what is needed to prepare him, wash him, shroud him, carry him to the graveyard and bury him in his grave in an appropriate manner.

When any inpatient — patient staying in this blessed hospital, recovers and is cured, the one who is in charge of the income of this *waqf* buys him a set of ordinary clothes, without any extravagance that would detract from the interests of the sick and those who are staying in the hospital. All of that is done as the person in charge sees fit, according to what he believes is necessary. The one who is in charge of this *waqf* must

remember to fear Allah in private and in public. He should not give precedence to a person of status over one who is weak, or to one who is strong over one who is weaker, or to a local person over a stranger. Rather, he should give precedence in his spending to that which will bring more reward and bring him closer to the Lord of lords."

4. The Hospital of Marrakesh. This was founded by *Amīr al-Mu'minīn* al-Manṣūr Abu Yusuf, one of the al-Muwaḥḥid (Almohad) kings of the Maghreb. He chose a large area of Marrakesh as the best location for the hospital, and issued commands that it be built in the best possible manner. He ordered that all kinds of trees and herbs and edible plants be planted therein, and that watercourses be installed that flowed through all the buildings, as well as through four pools, one of which was made of white marble. Then he ordered that it should be fitted with the finest furnishings, using various kinds of wool, linen, silk, leather and other things that defy description. He set up a pharmacy to make potions, lotions and eye-medicines, and he had prepared for the sick clothes for sleeping by night and by day, with different types for summer and winter. When the patient recovered, if he was poor he would be given money to live on when he was discharged, until he could start working again. If the patient was rich, he would be given his own money. The hospital was not only for the poor to the exclusion of the rich, rather any stranger who fell sick in Marrakesh would be taken there and treated until he recovered or died. Every Friday he (the Caliph) would come to the hospital and visit the sick, and ask them how they were and how the doctors and nurses were treating them.

These are just four examples out of hundreds of hospitals that were widespread throughout the east and the west of the Muslim

world at the time when Europe was wandering in the darkness of ignorance, and knew nothing of these hospitals, their precise organization and the sublime manifestation of humane spirit therein. We will quote to you what the German Orientalist Max Meyerhoff said about the state of European hospitals at the time when the hospitals in our civilization were as we have described above. Dr. Max said:

"The Arab hospitals and the health system in the ancient Islamic world teach us a hard and bitter lesson which we cannot appreciate fully unless we compare them with European hospitals of the same period."

It was only three centuries ago that public hospitals in any real sense came into existence in Europe, and we would not be exaggerating if we said that even as late as the eighteenth century (1710 CE), the sick were still being treated in their own homes or in special houses. Before then in Europe, the word "hospital" was used to simply describe "houses of kindness", a refuge for those who had nowhere else to go, whether they were sick or handicapped. The best example of that was the hospital called "Hotel Dieu" in Paris, the greatest hospital in Europe at that time. Both Max Tourdeau and Tenon described it as follows:

"The hospital contains 1200 beds, 486 of which are each for one person. As for the rest — none of which is wider than five feet — you will usually find in each one between three and six patients. The corridors are filled with mould and damp, there is no ventilation and they are always dark. All the time you can see around eight hundred sick people lying on the floor, piled on top of one another, on the bare ground or on piles of straw, in pitiful conditions ... In a medium-sized bed you will find four or five or six patients, one next to another, with the foot of

one against the head of another. You will find children next to old men, women next to men (you may not believe it but it is true). You may find a woman in labour next to a child who is suffering convulsions brought on by typhus and burning up with a fever, both of them next to a person with a skin disease who is scratching his worn-out skin with bleeding nails and with pus dripping from his pustules onto the covers. The food given to the sick is of the worst type imaginable, and it is distributed in extremely small amounts at long intervals with no kind of system. The nuns favour those patients who manifest a hypocritical kind of obedience, at the expense of other patients, so they bring them wine and sweets and fattening foods that have been donated by well-wishers at the time when those patients are most in need of following a strict diet. So many of them die from overeating, whilst others die of starvation. The doors of the hospital are always open, allowing anyone to come and go, thus spreading disease further. Disease is also spread through the hospital's garbage and putrid air. If charitable people did not donate to the sick, they would die of starvation, but they also die sometimes from overeating or from drinking too much wine. The beds are teeming with verminous insects, and the air in the rooms is so unbearably foul that the servants and nurses dare not enter the rooms until they have placed a sponge soaked in vinegar over their noses. The corpses of the dead are left for twenty-four hours or more before being removed from the bed, and often the corpses start to disintegrate and rot whilst they are still lying next to a patient who is almost losing his mind."

The comparison between the state of our hospitals during the peak of our civilization, and the state of the hospitals in the west at the same time points to the extent of the scientific decline of the

west, and the utter ignorance of the basics of running a hospital and even the most basic principles of good health. In the report that was narrated by the Arab Usāmah ibn Munqidh in *Kitāb al-I'tibār* we see the extent of the western Crusaders' ignorance of medicine and the ridiculous level of their doctor's knowledge. We can see that from the following two incidents:

"One of the strange features of their (the Franks') medicine was that the (Frankish) ruler of al-Munayṭarah wrote to my paternal uncle, asking him to send a doctor to treat the sick among his companions. So he sent to him a Christian doctor whose name was Thābit. He went and stayed there for ten days, then he came back. We said to him, 'How quickly you have treated the sick!' He said, 'They brought to me a knight who had an abscess on his foot and a woman who was suffering from consumption. I made a poultice for the knight which opened up the abscess and it got better, and I told the woman to follow a strict diet and gave her lots to drink. Then a Frankish doctor came to them and said, 'This man knows nothing about medicine!' He said to the knight, 'Which would you prefer, to live with one foot or to die with two?' He said, 'To live with one foot.' He said, 'Bring me a strong knight and a sharp axe.' So the knight and the axe were brought, whilst I was present, and he put the man's leg up on a piece of wood and said to the knight, 'Cut it off with one blow.' So he struck him with the axe while I was looking on, and that one blow did not cut off his foot. So he struck him again, and the marrow flowed from his leg and he died on the spot. Then he narrated how this Crusader doctor issued orders that the woman should be immersed in boiling water, and she also died on the spot.'"

We will end this discussion with the results to which we would like to draw attention after making these comparisons, which is that our civilization was at least nine centuries ahead of the westerners in organizing hospitals, and that our hospitals were based on noble, humane emotions the like of which is unknown in history and is unknown to the westerners even now. We were the first nation to discover the far-reaching effects that permissible entertainment, comedic literature and positive thinking have in healing the sick. We achieved a level of social security that western civilization has not reached even now, in that medicine, treatment and food were made available to the sick at no charge, and we even used to give the poor person who was convalescing enough money to spend on his needs until he was able to work. We reached the pinnacle of such humane tendencies in the days when we carried the banner of civilization. What has become of us now and what has become of the westerners?!

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Private and Public Libraries

A topic that is connected to discussion of charitable and academic institutions in our civilization is the topic of libraries. Schools existed for the purpose of teaching, and charitable institutions were funded by rulers, rich men and scholars in order to spread knowledge among the people, especially in those days when there were no printing presses and books were copied by hand, by scribes who specialized in this task. This made books so expensive that poor students or scholars were unable to purchase them, so how about if a person wanted to have a collection of books on the art or science in which he specialized? Hence, libraries were established in our societies in the past, motivated by both humane emotions and academic inclinations.

Perhaps Arabic literature is the richest of ancient world literatures in its praise of books, its fondness for them and encouraging people to acquire them, as if the book is a beloved person who has been away and whose house is too far away, so people's hearts are attached to him and think of him constantly. Aḥmad ibn Ismā'eel said:

"A book is a friend who does not bother you when you are busy, who does not call you when you are doing something else, who does not expect you to look nice for him. A book is a companion who does not praise you, a friend who does not try to tempt you or make you bored, an advisor who will not cheat you."

They used to prefer reading books to meeting people in gatherings, and they felt more content with reading books than with being close to a Caliph or men of authority.

Muhammad ibn 'Abdul-Malik az-Zayyāt, the litterateur, a vizier, stayed away from people in his house for a while, and al-Jāḥidh wanted to visit him. He thought it best to bring him a gift of a book by Seebawayh, the eminent scholar of the Arabic language. The vizier accepted the gift joyfully and said to al-Jāḥidh, "By Allah, you could not have brought me a gift any dearer to me than this!" One of the Caliphs asked one of the scholars to visit him in the evening. The servant who brought the invitation came and found the scholar sitting surrounded by books that he was reading. He said to him, "*Amīr al-Mu'minīn* (the Caliph) has invited you to join him." The scholar said to him: "I have wise men with me, with whom I am discussing things. When I have finished with them, I will come." When the servant went back to the Caliph and told him of that, he said, "Woe to you! Who are these wise men who are with him?" The servant said, "By Allah, O' *Amīr al-Mu'minīn*, there was no one with him." The Caliph said, "Bring him to me this instant!" When the scholar was brought to him, the Caliph said to him, "Who are these wise men who surrounded you?" He replied in the form of couplets and said, "O' *Amīr al-Mu'minīn*,

"They are companions whose speech does not bore,
They are honest and trustworthy whether you are absent or present.

When we sit with them, their speech will be the best help in eliminating worry and anxiety.

They teach us the knowledge of those who passed away before us,

and they teach us wisdom, discipline, advice and the way of leadership.

We do not fear any betrayal or bad manners from them,
And we are not trying to protect ourselves from their tongues or their hands.

If you say that they are dead, you will not be lying,
And if you say that they are alive, you will not be exaggerating."

Thus the Caliph realized that when he said he was meeting with wise men, he was referring to the scholars and wise men (whose books he was reading), so he did not rebuke him for being late.

Aṣ-Ṣāḥib ibn 'Abbās preferred to stay next to his library rather than to accept a high position in the court of Nooḥ ibn Manṣūr as-Sāmāni, because he was very fond of his library. He could not go without it and he could not carry it with him, so he preferred to stay next to it.

Because of this intellectual spirit, our scholars, rich men and rulers were fond of books and of collecting them, so much so that a calamity that befell their wealth or houses would be easier for them to bear than a calamity that befell their books.

One day the soldiers attacked the house of Ibn al-'Amīd, after they had overpowered his slaves and guards. Ibn al-'Amīd fled to his official residence, where he found that all his stores had been robbed, and he could not find something even to sit on or a cup from which to drink water. He was seized with anxiety about his books and papers, for nothing was dearer to him than them and he had many books covering all branches of knowledge, wisdom and literature, a library which took more than one hundred camels to carry. When Ibn al-'Amīd saw the servant who took care of his

books, he asked him about them, and the servant replied, "They are safe, and no one touched them." Ibn al-'Amīd was relieved, and he said to his servant, "I bear witness that you are a real man, for the rest of the stores can be replaced, but this treasure — meaning his library — cannot be replaced."

Because of this intellectual spirit they used to compete in buying academic works from their authors as soon as they were completed. Al-Ḥakam, the governor of Andalusia heard of the book *al-Aghāni*, which is now famous in the world of literature. He sent one thousand dinars to its author Abu'l-Faraj al-Iṣfahāni to buy a copy from him. Abu'l-Faraj sent him a copy of his book, and his book was read in Andalusia before it was read in Iraq, the homeland of its author.

This intellectual spirit led to the spread of libraries in all parts of the Muslim world. There was hardly any school that did not have a library next to it, and you would hardly find any small village that did not have a library. As for the capitals and big cities, they were filled with libraries in a manner that was unmatched in mediaeval history.

Libraries were of two main types: public and private.

The public libraries were founded by the Caliphs, governors, scholars and rich men. Special buildings were constructed for them, and sometimes they were attached to mosques and major schools.

With regard to the private buildings, they included numerous rooms connected by spacious corridors, and the books were placed on shelves attached to the walls. Each room was devoted to one branch of knowledge, so books on fiqh were gathered in one room, books on medicine in another, books on literature in

another, and so on. There were halls for the readers, and rooms for the scribes who copied the books. In some libraries there were music rooms where readers could go to take a break and renew their energy. This was one of the unique features of our civilization. There were also rooms for study circles and academic discussions between the patrons of these libraries. All of them were furnished in a luxurious and comfortable fashion. Some of them also had rooms where the patrons could eat, and where strangers could sleep, as it is said of the library of 'Ali ibn Yaḥya ibn al-Munajjim. He had a large palace in a village (Karkar, in the suburb of al-Qafaṣ) near Baghdad, in which was a huge library known as *Khizānat al-Ḥikmah* (the Store of Wisdom). People would come there from all over, and they would stay there and learn all kinds of knowledge. Books were made available to them and food was provided for them, all from the wealth of 'Ali ibn Yaḥya himself. There were even more interesting cases than that, the like of which is unknown nowadays even in the most advanced western capitals. In Moṣal there was a house built by Abu'l-Qāsim Ja'far ibn Muhammad ibn Ḥamdān al-Moṣali, which he called *Dār al-'Ilm* (the House of knowledge); there, he kept a store of books as a *waqf* for any seeker of knowledge and no one would be turned away from it. Whenever a stranger came to it, seeking literature, if he was poor he would give him books and money. This library was open every day. Have you ever heard of a library in London or Washington or any of the great capital cities of the world that provides literature and money to those who come seeking knowledge?

The public libraries had employees, headed by a librarian, who was always one of the most famous scholars of his age. There were also librarians who would go and retrieve books for the readers; translators who translated books from other languages

into Arabic; scribes who copied out books in their beautiful handwriting; binders who would bind the books so as to protect them from disintegrating or being lost. This is apart from the servants and others who took care of the libraries' needs.

Each library, whether it was large or small, had an index which could be referred to in order to make it easier to use the books. It was classified according to the categories of knowledge. In addition to this, there was a list on each set of shelves which gave the names of the books contained on those shelves. It was a known feature of the library system that in most cases, borrowing books and taking them away from the library was permitted in return for a deposit. This deposit was paid by most people, but the scholars and prominent figures were not required to pay a deposit.

With regard to the financial resources that covered the expenses of these libraries, some of them were supported by *waqfs* that were set up especially for that purpose. This was the case with most of the public libraries. Others were funded by donations from rulers, rich men and scholars who founded those libraries. It is said that Muhammad ibn 'Abdul-Malik az-Zayyāt paid the translators and scribes (in his library) two thousand dinars each month. And al-Ma'mūn gave Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq an amount of gold equal in weight to the weight of each book that he translated into Arabic.

Some renowned libraries

Now we would like to give a brief summary of the libraries — both public and private, that are well known in history.

One of the most famous libraries was the library of the Faṭimid Caliphs in Cairo. This was a wonderful library that contained rare *Muṣḥafs* (copies of the Qur'an) and books.

cording to many historians, the number of books it contained s more than two million. Al-Maqrīzi said that it contained one llion and six hundred thousand books.

Another famous library was the *Dār al-Ḥikmah* (House of sdom) library in Cairo. This was founded by al-Ḥākim bi rillah, and was opened on the tenth of *Jumāda al-Ākhirah* in 5 AH, after it had been furnished and decorated, and curtains d been hung on all its doors and in all its corridors, and pervisors, librarians and cleaners had been employed in it. It ntained a collection of books such as had never been amassed any king before. It comprised of forty compartments, each ntained 18,000 books of ancient knowledge. It was opened to Some of them came to read the books, some came to copy oks and some came to learn. It contained all that anyone could ed of ink, pens, paper and inkpots.

Another famous library was *Bayt al-Ḥikmah* (the House of Wisdom) in Baghdad, which was founded by Harūn ar-Rashīd d which reached the pinnacle of its glory during the time of al-a'mūn. It was more like a university containing books, where en would gather to debate, read and copy books. There were ribes and translators who translated whatever books ar-Rashīd d al-Ma'mūn could obtain during their conquests of Ankara, morium and Cyprus. Ibn an-Nadīm tells us that al-Ma'mūn used correspond with the Roman king, and when al-Ma'mūn feated him in one of his battles, one of the conditions of the ace-treaty was that the Roman king would permit the translation all the books in his possession by scholars whom al-Ma'mūn ould send to him, and this was done. This is the greatest example history of a victorious ruler who saw no greater reward of

into Arabic; scribes who copied out books in their beautiful handwriting; binders who would bind the books so as to protect them from disintegrating or being lost. This is apart from the servants and others who took care of the libraries' needs.

Each library, whether it was large or small, had an index which could be referred to in order to make it easier to use the books. It was classified according to the categories of knowledge. In addition to this, there was a list on each set of shelves which gave the names of the books contained on those shelves. It was a known feature of the library system that in most cases, borrowing books and taking them away from the library was permitted in return for a deposit. This deposit was paid by most people, but the scholars and prominent figures were not required to pay a deposit.

With regard to the financial resources that covered the expenses of these libraries, some of them were supported by *waqfs* that were set up especially for that purpose. This was the case with most of the public libraries. Others were funded by donations from rulers, rich men and scholars who founded those libraries. It is said that Muhammad ibn 'Abdul-Malik az-Zayyāt paid the translators and scribes (in his library) two thousand dinars each month. And al-Ma'mūn gave Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq an amount of gold equal in weight to the weight of each book that he translated into Arabic.

Some renowned libraries

Now we would like to give a brief summary of the libraries – both public and private, that are well known in history.

One of the most famous libraries was the library of the Fatimid Caliphs in Cairo. This was a wonderful library that contained rare *Muṣḥafs* (copies of the Qur'an) and books.

According to many historians, the number of books it contained was more than two million. Al-Maqrīzi said that it contained one million and six hundred thousand books.

Another famous library was the *Dār al-Ḥikmah* (House of Wisdom) library in Cairo. This was founded by al-Ḥākim bi Amrillah, and was opened on the tenth of *Jumāda al-Ākhirah* in 395 AH, after it had been furnished and decorated, and curtains had been hung on all its doors and in all its corridors, and supervisors, librarians and cleaners had been employed in it. It contained a collection of books such as had never been amassed by any king before. It comprised of forty compartments, each contained 18,000 books of ancient knowledge. It was opened to all. Some of them came to read the books, some came to copy books and some came to learn. It contained all that anyone could need of ink, pens, paper and inkpots.

Another famous library was *Bayt al-Ḥikmah* (the House of Wisdom) in Baghdad, which was founded by Harūn ar-Rashīd and which reached the pinnacle of its glory during the time of al-Ma'mūn. It was more like a university containing books, where men would gather to debate, read and copy books. There were scribes and translators who translated whatever books ar-Rashīd and al-Ma'mūn could obtain during their conquests of Ankara, Amorium and Cyprus. Ibn an-Nadīm tells us that al-Ma'mūn used to correspond with the Roman king, and when al-Ma'mūn defeated him in one of his battles, one of the conditions of the peace-treaty was that the Roman king would permit the translation of all the books in his possession by scholars whom al-Ma'mūn would send to him, and this was done. This is the greatest example in history of a victorious ruler who saw no greater reward of

victory than the books of knowledge which he could bring to his own nation and country.

Another famous library was the library of al-Ḥakam in Andalusia. This was a huge library, and it is said that it contained four hundred thousand volumes. It had an index that was so precisely detailed and organized that the index of the poetry collections alone came in forty-four parts. In that library there were professional scribes who copied books and people who were highly-skilled in the art of bookbinding. In Andalusia at that time, he amassed a collection of books the like of which had never been seen before or since.

Another famous library was the library of Bani 'Ammār in Tripoli. This was a marvellous and huge library in which one hundred and eighty scribes worked, copying books. They worked in shifts by night and day so that the work of copying never ceased. Bani 'Ammār were keen to fill their library with all kinds of rare and new books, so they employed specialists and traders to travel the land and obtain useful books for them from all over the country and from foreign lands. Al-Ma'arri used this library and mentioned it in some of his books. There was some difference of opinion as the number of books it contained, but the most likely opinion is that it contained one million books.

Some of the private libraries are also recorded in history. In every city in the east and in the west of the Muslim world, there were such libraries, and you rarely find a scholar who did not have his own library containing thousands of books.

One example is the library of al-Fatḥ ibn Khāqān (who was killed in 247 AH). His library was huge, and he appointed one of the best men of his time in terms of knowledge and literature, namely 'Ali ibn Yaḥya al-Munajjim, to collect books for it. So he

amassed a large collection of books of wisdom such as was never found anywhere else.

Another example is the library of Ibn al-Khashshāb (d. 567 AH). He was one of the most well versed people in grammar, and he also had knowledge of *tafsīr*, hadith, logic and philosophy. He was insatiably fond of books, which made him do some reprehensible things in order to collect them. If he went to the book market and wanted to buy a book, he would distract the people and tear a page from the book, then he would say that it had something missing so that he could buy it for a lower price. If he borrowed a book from someone, and the owner asked for it back, he would say, "There is a big dispute between me and the book and I have not over powered it."

Another example is the library of Jamāl ad-Dīn al-Qafaṭi (d. 646 AH). He collected an indescribable number of books, which were brought to him in the hope of receiving some favour from him. He had no worldly interests apart from books, and he devoted himself to them. He refused to get married lest a wife and children should distract him from his books. He bequeathed his library, which was worth fifty thousand dinars, to an-Nāṣir.

Another example is the library of the scholars of Bani Jarādah in Aleppo. One of them — Abu'l-Ḥasan ibn Abi Jarādah (d. 548 AH) — transcribed with his own hand three cupboards full of rare books, a cupboard of books belonging to his son Abu'l-Barakāt and a cupboard belonging to his son 'Abdullāh.

Another example is the library of al-Muwaffaq ibn al-Maṭrān ad-Dimashqi (d. 587 AH). He was extremely interested in acquiring books, so much so that when he died his library contained ten thousand volumes on medicine and other topics. He

had three scribes working for him full-time, and he paid them salaries and provided food for them.

Even though we feel happy and proud when we speak of the spread of libraries in the Muslim world during the time when our civilization was flourishing, we are filled with sorrow when we remember the fate of these libraries, and how they were destroyed and burned. We cannot fully comprehend the loss of the knowledge that was contained in them.

Our libraries were destroyed, resulting in the loss of millions of books that were lost to the world forever, books which were among the most precious products of human thought in history.

The catastrophe wrought by the Tartars when they conquered Baghdad affected these libraries before it affected anything else. We all know that the barbarian Tartars threw all the books they found in the public libraries into the Tigris until the river overflowed because of the books thrown into it and a horseman could cross from one side to the other on the books. The water of the river ran black for months because of the ink of the books that were thrown into it.

The catastrophe wrought by the Crusaders deprived us of the libraries that had existed in Tripoli, al-Ma'arrah, al-Quds (Jerusalem), Gaza, 'Asqalān (Ashkelon) and other cities that were destroyed by the Crusaders. It is sufficient for us to note that some historians estimate that the number of books destroyed by the Crusaders in Tripoli alone was three million volumes.

The catastrophe of the Spanish conquest of Andalusia deprived us of those magnificent libraries of which history speaks with astonishment. They were all burned by the religious fanatics. Historians have estimated that in a single day one million books were burned in the main square of Granada.

Let us leave the calamities that befell us from without, and look at those that befell us from within, as a result of internal turmoil. The library of the Fatimid caliphs was destroyed when it was overrun by the masses of Mamluks and Turks, who lit fires in it; the slaves shared out the leather of the bookbindings amongst themselves and made it into shoes which they wore. They threw a large number of books into the Nile, and took some of them to other regions. The rest of them were scattered in the wind and formed piles known as *tilāl al-kutub* (piles of books).

In Aleppo there was a large library called *Khizānat aṣ-Ṣūfiyah*. This was robbed during troubles that arose between Sunnis and Shi'ahs at the time of 'Ashūra', and only a small part of it was left.

The library of al-Ḥākim al-Mustanṣir in Andalusia was destroyed as a result of internal turmoil when the Berbers entered Cordoba. Many of the books were sold, and the rest were confiscated.

The strangest disasters, that make one laugh at what the fools do with knowledge and books, include the following tale. The governor Ibn Fātik — one of the governors of Egypt in the fifth century AH — had a huge library where he used to spend most of his time, and he rarely left it. He had a wife who held a high position in the state, but she felt jealous of the books. When he died, she and her slave women went to the cupboards where the books were stored — and she was feeling upset because of the books and because he had spent so much time with the books and ignored her — and she started to wail for him, all the time she and her slave women throwing the books into a large pool of water in the middle of the house. This was the action of a woman who was overwhelmed by her anger towards the books, so she took her

revenge on the books after her husband died. There are still wives who feel jealous of their husbands' books just as this lady did. Long ago, the wife of Imam az-Zuhri told him, when she saw him immersed in his book, "By Allah, these books are harder for me to bear than three co-wives!"

This is the story of our libraries during the ages of our civilization, and this is how they ended. Although it is difficult to acknowledge good things about our enemies, we have to acknowledge that the libraries of Europe have preserved for us a great deal of the remnants of this legacy, for they have stores of Arabic books the like of which cannot be found in the entire Muslim world nowadays.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Academic Gatherings and Conferences

This is an interesting aspect of our civilization, and it had a great impact in spreading education and propagating knowledge, raising the level of society's knowledge and taste by means of education. This refers to the academic gatherings and conferences which multiplied in our capitals and major cities alongside the many great schools, institutes and libraries. These gatherings, with their many and varied types of debate, were a brilliant manifestation of the intellectual awakening of our ummah at the time of its glory and power. You would not doubt, if you saw the different classes of people — Caliphs, governors, scholars, literati and poets — making their discussions in the private and open gatherings: philosophical, literary and academic competitions, that this ummah had reached such a level of loving knowledge and longing to drink from its springs that you would sense its glory and development.

These gatherings were of many different kinds:

Some of the gatherings that were held in the presence of the Caliphs would be led by the Caliph himself, and attended by the most famous scholars, literati and *fuqaha'* in his capital. The gatherings of the Caliphs developed as Islamic civilization and culture developed. So at the time of the Rightly-Guided Caliphs (*al-Khulafa' ar-Rāshidīn*), the discussions would focus on affairs of state and the conduct of the governors, like a parliament in

which the leaders of the people discuss the matters and issues that concern the state. One day, 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (ﷺ) needed a qualified governor whom he could appoint to take care of an important task that had to do with the affairs of the state. He said to his companions, "Show me a man whom I can appoint to take care of a matter that is of concern to me." They said, "So and so." He said, "We have no need of him." They asked, "Who do you want?" He said, "I want a man who, if he is among the people and he is not their leader, will look as if he is their leader, and if he is their leader he will look as if he is just one of them." They said, "The only person we know who is like this is ar-Rabī' ibn Ziyād al-Ḥārithi." He said, "You are right." So he appointed him.

Then during the time of the Umayyads, the gathering of the Caliphs became gatherings in which literature, wisdom and poetry were discussed.

'Abdullāh ibn Hāshim once attended the gathering of Mu'āwiyah, and Mu'āwiyah said: "Who will tell me about generosity, bravery and chivalry?" 'Abdullāh said:

> "O' *Amīr al-Mu'minīn*. As for generosity, it means giving money and giving before someone asks you. As for bravery, it means being courageous when advancing and being patient when one's feet start slipping out of fear (when retreating). And as for chivalry, it means being religiously committed, putting things right and protecting one's neighbour."

One day 'Abdul-Malik said in one of his gatherings: "Who among you can tell me some parts of the body in alphabetical order,[58] and I will give him whatever he wants?" Suwayd ibn Ghuflah said: "I can do it, O' *Amīr al-Mu'minīn*!" (The Caliph)

[58] i.e., according to the Arabic alphabet.

said, "Do it." So Suwayd said: "*Anf* (nose), *baṭn* (stomach), *tarquwah* (collarbone), *thaghr* (mouth), *jumjumah* (skull), *ḥalq* (throat), *khadd* (cheek), *dimāgh* (brain)..." Another person in the gathering said: "O' *Amīr al-Mu'minīn*, I can mention parts of the body in alphabetical order by twos." Suwayd said, "I can do it by threes: *anf, asnān, udhn* (nose, teeth, ears)..." and he continued like that. 'Abdul-Malik was amazed at how quick-witted he was, and he rewarded him.

A Bedouin attended the gathering of 'Abdul-Malik, where the poet Jarīr was present. 'Abdul-Malik said to the Bedouin, "Do you know anything about poetry?" The Bedouin said, "Ask me whatever you want, O' *Amīr al-Mu'minīn*." He said, "Which verse has the most eloquent praise?" The Bedouin replied, "It is the words of Jarīr:

> 'Are you not the best of those who rode on horses,
> the most generous of all people?'"

Jarīr raised his head and stood tall. Then 'Abdul-Malik said: "Which verse is the most eloquent in speaking of pride?" The Bedouin said, "It is the words of Jarīr:

> 'When Banu Tamīm got angry with me,
> I thought that all of mankind was angry with me.'"

Jarīr stirred with happiness. Then 'Abdul-Malik asked, "Which verse is the most eloquent in condemnation?" The Bedouin said: "It is the words of Jarīr:

> 'You should feel ashamed of yourself, for you are no more than
> a man from Numayr,
> and you have nothing to do with Ka'b or Kilāb.'"

Jarīr beamed at that. Then 'Abdul-Malik said: "Which verse is the most eloquent in speaking of love?" The Bedouin said: "It is the words of Jarīr:

'The eyes that have a marked contrast of white and black
Have killed us, then our dead will never be brought back to life.'"

Jarīr looked happy. Then 'Abdul-Malik said: "Which verse is the most eloquent in making an analogy?" The Bedouin said: "It is the words of Jarīr:

'A night came to them whose stars were
like lamps with the finest wicks.'"

Jarīr was so excited and happy that he said, "Give my reward to this Bedouin, O' *Amīr al-Mu'minīn*." 'Abdul-Malik said, "He will have double, and you will have your reward too, O' Jarīr; nothing will be detracted from it." And the Bedouin left with eight thousand dirhams in his right hand and a pack of clothes in his left.

The gatherings of the Caliphs developed further during the Abbasid era, when they were held in large rooms that were lavishly furnished, attended by many scholars and literati who discussed all kinds of subjects. This was in addition to the gatherings held for entertainment where the content was largely poetry, and poets, discussing the meanings of the words sung by the singers. Among the most famous 'Abbasid Caliphs in terms of the luxurious and marvelous nature of their gatherings were ar-Rashīd and al-Ma'mūn. As for ar-Rashīd, the most knowledgeable scholars of every field of art and science used to attend his gatherings. Among the poets who attended his gatherings included Abu Nawwās, Abu'l-'Atāhiyah, Da'bal,

Muslim ibn al-Walīd and al-'Abbās ibn al-Aḥnaf. And among the *fuqaha'* who attended were Abu Yūsuf, ash-Shāfa'i and Muhammad ibn al-Ḥasan. Among the scholars of Arabic language were Abu 'Ubaydah, al-Aṣma'i, and al-Kasā'i. Among the historians was the famous historian al-Wāqidi, and among the singers were Ibrāhīm al-Moṣuli and his son Isḥāq.

We would like to cite an example of the literary debates which took place in these gatherings. One day, Sībawayh, al-Kasā'i and the leading scholars of Arabic language and literature were present in the gathering. Al-Kasā'i claimed that the Arabs would say, "*Kuntu adhunnu az-zunbūr ashadda las'an min al-naḥlah, fa idha huwa iyyāha* (I used to think that the hornet's sting was worse than the bee's, to express the same)." Sībawayh said, "No, the correct way to say it is, *fa idha huwa hiya* (to express the same)." They disputed this point for a long time, then they agreed to refer the matter to a "pure" Arab (i.e., an Arab from the desert) who was not influenced by the speech of the city-dwellers. Ar-Rashīd was extremely fond of al-Kasā'i, who had been his teacher before he became the Caliph. So he summoned an Arab and asked him, and the Arab said the phrase as Sībawayh had said it. He told him, "We want you to say it the way al-Kasā'i said it." The Arab replied, "My tongue cannot do that." Finally he agreed that when they asked him about the matter in front of others, he would say, "al-Kasā'i is right." This was done in front of a large gathering, and Sībawayh realized that they were ganging up on him, so he left Baghdad in sorrow. They said that he did not live for long after that, and he died of a broken heart.

One of the debates of fiqh that took place in one of his gatherings was when Muhammad ibn al-Ḥasan, the companion of Abu Ḥanīfah, described al-Kasā'i as not having a good knowledge

of fiqh, and said that he only had a good knowledge of Arabic. Al-Kasā'i said: "Whoever becomes proficient in one branch of knowledge, that will guide him in other branches of knowledge." So Muhammad tested him by asking, "What do you say about a person who makes a mistake in *sujūd as-sahw* (the prostration of forgetfulness)? Should he prostrate again?" Al-Kasā'i said, "No." Muhammad asked, "Why not?" Al-Kasā'i answered, "Because the grammarians say that you cannot form a diminutive from a diminutive."

As for al-Ma'mūn, his gathering was one of the most marvellous academic gatherings in the history of Islamic civilization, because he himself was one of the most prominent scholars, and his court was filled with a huge number of scholars, literati, poets, doctors and philosophers whom al-Ma'mūn invited from all parts of his kingdom and honoured all of them, irrespective of their intellectual inclinations or national origins. He would often start debates and provoke the scholars to discuss things, but he used to forbid the philosophers and scholars, while they were in his gathering, to support their arguments with verses from their holy books. He would say to them: "Do not quote from the Qur'an or from the Gospel hoping to put pressure on me to accept your argument. But I do not wish that I was not one of the Arabs, lest that should lead me not to accept the truth." Then he explained to them why he preferred the Arabs to others, because when they were in their desert they had no book and no knowledge, but despite that they had learned, through their innate common sense, about plants and the land, and what was good for sheep and what was good for camels. They had learned about time and the different seasons, so they divided the year into spring, summer, autumn and winter. Then they learned that drinking water came from the sky, and they understood about the climate

and the changes of time. They learned how to use the stars in the sky in order to navigate on land. They agreed among themselves on something to stop them from committing evil actions and encourage them to do good, to make them avoid ignoble traits and pursue noble characteristics, so that even though they lived in rough terrain and their life was harsh, any man among them could describe what noble characteristics were in a complete fashion that left nothing to be added, and he could fully describe blameworthy characteristics, leaving nothing out. They had nothing to talk about except urging good deeds, then taking care of neighbours, spending money and doing praiseworthy things. Each of them was guided to these virtues by his innate common sense, without any teaching or disciplinary process, rather, it all stemmed from natural wisdom. Hence, Ibn al-Muqaffa' said: For this reason I say to you that they are the wisest of nations, because of their sound innate nature and physical make-up, their right way of thinking and their understanding.

We should not neglect to mention the role of booksellers, because the bookshops were also places where scholars gathered and had the best conversations in which they exchanged knowledge, each of them speaking of that branch of knowledge in which he was specialized. The booksellers were usually literate and educated men, who benefited from their profession in order to satisfy their longing for knowledge. The reputed scholars Ibn an-Nadīm, the author of *al-Fihrist*, and Yaqūt, the author of *Mu'jam al-Udaba'* and *Mu'jam al-Buldān*, were both booksellers. Abu'l-Faraj al-Aṣfahāni, the author of *al-Aghāni*, and Abu Naṣr az-Zajjāj, the famous scholar of language and literature, used to meet in the bookshops and speak about poetry and literature with the poets who used to come to those shops. In one of their meetings, Abu'l-Ḥasan 'Ali ibn Yūsuf, the poet, was sitting with the

bookseller Abu'l-Fatḥ ibn al-Ḥazzāz when he was reciting the poetry of Ibrāhīm ibn al-'Abbās al-Ṣawli, in which he says:

"He saw my poverty even though it was not obvious at all,
And that pained his eyes until it disappeared."

When he reached this line, he liked it very much and repeated it. Abu Naṣr az-Zajjāj said: "Abu'l-Faraj told me to get up and go to him, and say to him, 'You seem to like this line too much. Where is the beauty in it?' So I went and said that to him, and he said, 'I like the phrase' and that pained his eyes.' I went back to al-Aṣfahāni and told him that. He told me, 'Go back to him and tell him, you are wrong. The beauty in it is the phrase,' even though it was not obvious at all."

Concerning this, one of the poets said:

"Sitting in the marketplace is something blameworthy,
But some gatherings may be good.
Do not go anywhere except the horse market,
The weapons market and the book market.
For the former provides tools for the men of war,
And the latter provides tools for the men of literature."

And what he said is true. For we need to know about weapons and war, but we also need knowledge and literature. This is essential for every noble man who wants to live a life of integrity and dignity.

The nation that deserves to live finds its nourishment in knowledge above all else. Our ummah, which restored life to other nations and peoples, used to use all methods of acquiring, spreading and propagating knowledge. Indeed all the people of this ummah, from the Caliph to scholars and traders used to compete in accumulating the tools of knowledge and books, and

in building schools where, as you have seen, the only talk was of things that increase knowledge and broaden and enlighten minds. Even in gatherings for the purpose of entertainment and leisure, they were scholarly and literary, and used that time to discuss matters, explain subtle issues and correct mistakes, as we can see from the following historical example:

In one of the gatherings of the Caliph al-Wāthiq, a slave maid sang the following line of verse:

"O' wrongdoer, your mistreating a man (*inna muṣābakum rajulan*)
Who gave you *salāms* as a greeting is wrongdoing (*dhulmun*)."

One of the people present thought that her saying *rajulan* (a man, accusative) was wrong, because he thought that this was *khabr inna* [the predicate of the particle *inna* (often translated as "verily" or "indeed"), which should appear in the nominative]. He did not realize that the word *rajul* (man) was the object of the verbal noun *muṣābakum* (your mistreating), and that the predicate of *inna* in this phrase was the word *dhulm* (wrongdoing). The slave maid did not accept this man's view, and said, "I do not accept this and I am not going to change it. I have recited it like this to the most learned man in Baṣrah, Abu 'Uthmān al-Māzini." Al-Wāthiq ordered that he should be brought from Baṣrah to Baghdad. Al-Māzini said: "When I visited al-Wāthiq, he asked me my name. I told him, 'Bakr ibn Muhammad al-Māzini.' He said, 'Māzin Shaybān or Māzin Tamīm (i.e., which Māzin tribe)?' I said, 'Māzin Shaybān.' He said, 'Tell us what you think about this matter.' I said, 'O' *Amīr al-Mu'minīn*, I am nervous of you.'" Then he brought at-Tūzi, who was the man who had said that the slave girl/maid was wrong when he was in the house of al-Wāthiq. Al-Māzini said to him: "What do you say about the sentence *Inna*

ḍarbaka Zaydan dhulmun (Verily your beating Zayd is wrongdoing)?" At-Tūzi said, "That is sufficient for me," and he understood.[59]

We have not spoken here of the gatherings of the *fuqaha'*, hadith scholars and preachers, for these were widespread in every city and village.

To sum up: during the period when our civilization was flourishing, the Muslim world was filled with the light of knowledge which filled its houses, mosques, schools, institutions, gatherings and shops, so that even a great scholar like Gustave Le Bon could rightfully say:

> "The Arabs had a great love of knowledge and they attained a high level of culture in a short period after their conquests, so that they were able to build a civilization in which literature, science and art flourished and reached their pinnacle."

[59] i.e., he realized his mistake and understood al-Māzini's point.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Capitals and Major Cities

Now we would turn to the fourth century AH, or the tenth century CE, and look briefly at the cities of the Muslim world and the cities of the west. We would notice a huge difference between the two worlds. We would be astonished at the sight of a world teeming with life, strength and civilization — namely the Muslim world — and a primitive world with no trace of life, knowledge or civilization — which is the western world. We will try to compare the cities of these two worlds, starting with the western world and how its people lived, the size of its cities and their standard of living.

It says in *The History of Knowledge* by Afees and Rambo that Anglo-Saxon England in the seventh century CE until after the tenth century was a poor city in the country, and was cut off from other countries, living a primitive life. Houses were built of undressed stone with mud used as mortar, built on flat low land, with small windows that could not be closed properly. Stables and barns had no windows. Cattle and flocks, which were the main source of livelihood, were frequently killed by diseases and epidemics. The people were no better off than the animals in terms of accommodation and security. The chief of a tribe would live in his hut with his family, servants and others, all together in a large room in the middle of which would be a hearth which would send smoke up through a rough hole in the roof. They would all eat at one table, with the master and his consort sitting on one side.

Forks were unknown and the cups did not have flat bottoms, so each person would have to keep his cup in his hand or empty it in one draught. In the evening, the master would go to his bedroom, after eating, drinking and carousing. Then the table and benches would be removed and all the people present would sleep in that room, either on the floor or on raised platforms. Each person would place his weapon by his head, for the thieves were so audacious that people had to be constantly on their guard lest they be caught unaware.

At that time, Europe was covered with thick forests and was backward in terms of agriculture. There were many swamps on the outskirts of the cities from which emanated lethal odours that killed people in huge numbers. The houses of Paris and London were built of wood and mud mixed with straw and reeds (like village houses in our country fifty years ago). They had no windows, and carpets were entirely unknown; the only floor-covering they had was straw spread on the floor. They had no concept of hygiene; they would throw animal entrails and kitchen waste in front of their houses, from which came foul odours. One family would sleep in a single room, men, women and children together, and in many instances their livestock would be in the same room with them. For them, the word "bed" referred to a sack filled with straw, on top of which would be a sack filled with wool which was used as a pillow. Their streets had no sewers, pavements or lamps. The greatest city in Europe contained no more than twenty-five thousand inhabitants.

This is how the west happened to be during the Middle Ages, until the eleventh century or later, as their own historians admit. Now let us move quickly — before we forget this image — to the east, to such cities and capitals as Baghdad, Damascus, Cordoba,

Granada and Seville. Let us see how these cities were and what our civilization was like.

Let us visit the cities of Andalusia, which were neighbours of the Europe that we have just discussed. We would begin with Cordoba, and try to focus on its main features, sans all the details and see what do we find?

At the time of the Umayyad Caliph 'Abdur-Raḥmān III, Cordova was the capital of Andalusia. It was lit with lamps at night, by the light of which a person could find his way walking ten miles (sixteen kilometers) from the city. Its streets were paved with stones and garbage was regularly removed from the streets. It was surrounded with beautiful gardens, so that anyone coming to the city could enjoy the sight of gardens and orchards for hours before he reached it. Its inhabitants numbered more than one million souls, at the time when the largest city in Europe had no more than twenty five thousand inhabitants. There were nine hundred baths; 283,000 houses; eighty thousand palaces; six hundred mosques. The circumference of the city was eight parasangs (i.e., thirty thousand cubits). Everyone in the city was educated. In the eastern side of the city there were one hundred and seventy women busy in copying the *Muṣḥafs* in Kufi script; this was just in one quarter of the city. There were eighty schools in which the poor could study for free, and there were fifty hospitals. As for its mosque, its traces still remain today as a lasting sign of artistry and creativity. The minarets were forty cubits high, and its magnificent dome rested on 1093 pillars of carved wood, which in turn, rested on columns made from different kinds of marble in a checkerboard pattern. It was lit at night by four thousand and seven hundred lamps, which used 24 thousand raṭls of oil each year. On the southern side there were

nineteen doors covered with expertly-manufactured bronze plates, apart from the middle door which was plated with gold. On the eastern and western sides, there were nine doors similar to those on the south. As for its *miḥrāb*[60], it is sufficient to note what the European historians said concerning it:

"It is the most beautiful thing that mankind has ever set eyes on. Nothing can match its beauty and adornment in the ancient and/or modern times."

Later on the palace of az-Zahrā' was built in Cordoba, which has gone down in history for its artistic wonder. The Turkish historian Ḍiya Pasha said of it:

"It was the wonder of all time, for it had never crossed anyone's mind to build something like this since the time Allah created the universe. Such a design was never conceived of by any of the engineers since the human reason is known to."

Its domes rested on 4,316 pillars of various kinds of marble, engraved with symmetrical designs. Its floor was paved with multicoloured pieces of marble, in a beautiful design. Its walls were covered with lapis lazuli and gold, and in its courtyards there were fountains of fresh water that flowed and disappeared in pools of white marble of various shapes, until it disappeared in a pool in the courtyard of the Caliph. In the middle of the pool there were swans made of gold, with pearls suspended from their heads. In the water there were thousands of fish of different types, and the amount of bread thrown to them every day was twelve thousand loaves.

[60] Prayer niche indicating the direction of prayer.

In az-Zahrā' there was a hall called Qaṣr al-Khilāfah (the Caliph's Palace). Its roof and walls were made of thick layers of pure gold and marble, and in the middle of it there was a huge pool filled with quicksilver. On each side of the hall there were eight doors with frames of ivory and ebony, decorated with gold and all kinds of jewels, resting on pillars of multicoloured marble and clear glass. The sun's rays would enter the hall through these doors and strike the centre and walls of the hall, dazzling the eyes. When an-Nāṣir wanted to scare anyone in his court, he would gesture to his slaves to stir up the quicksilver and there would appear to be flashes of lightning in the hall, so that the people present would be terrified, thinking that the whole room was flying, so long the quicksilver remained moving. The palace was surrounded with beautiful gardens and spacious squares, beyond which was a huge wall that encompassed this magnificent complex. This wall had three hundred war towers. Az-Zahrā' included the houses of the Caliph and princes, and the harem, and huge halls where the king sat in a special place. It had a dome whose bricks were made of gold and silver, but the *qāḍi* Mundhir ibn Sa'īd denounced the Caliph for this in front of a huge crowd of people in the main mosque of Cordoba, so he knocked it down and rebuilt it with bricks of clay. It also contained workshops, such as a workshop for making weapons, another for making jewellery, another for engraving, and workshops for other kinds of arts and crafts. The construction of az-Zahrā' took four years. On average 6000 stones would be quarried each day, apart from the stones used in paving. The number of workers who laboured on it each day was ten thousand; they used 1400 mules and every three days they brought 1100 loads of lime and plaster.

Every day, one thousand skilled artisans worked on the construction of the mosque of az-Zahrā', including 300 masons,

200 carpenters and 500 skilled hired labourers and other workers. It was built in only forty-eight days, a speed unprecedented.

In the great palace in 351 AH, the Caliph al-Mustanṣir met the king of Christian Spain, Ardon the son of Alfonso. He was stunned when he entered az-Zahrā' and saw how magnificent and huge it was, and he saw its servants and soldiers with their weapons. He was even more amazed when he reached the *majlis* of the Caliph al-Mustanṣir, with the leaders of his kingdom, nobles, prominent scholars, preachers and commanders standing beside him. When the Spanish king approached the Caliph al-Mustanṣir, he uncovered his head and took off his cloak, and remained bareheaded until the Caliph gave him permission to come nearer. When he came towards the Caliph he fell prostrate for a while, then he stood up, took a few steps forwards, and prostrated again. He did that several times until he came before the Caliph. He knelt down to kiss his hand, and the Caliph gave him his hand. Then he walked backwards, not turning his back towards the Caliph, and sat down on a chair that had been prepared for him. The Caliph said, welcoming him, "Be of good cheer, for whatever you are hoping for, you will have. We think highly of you and we welcome you more than you think." When the words of the Caliph were translated to him, he felt so happy that he came down from his chair and kissed the carpet, then he said: "I am the slave of *Amīr al-Mu'minīn*, my protector, with whose blessings I am showered, who is ruling me and my men. Wherever he wants me to be I will be grateful, and however he wants me to serve him I will do that with the utmost sincerity." The Caliph said to him: "You are highly thought of among us, like one who deserves our approval. You will have preferential treatment from us over the rest of your people (fellow Christians),

which will make you happy, because of your seeking our generosity and the shade of our authority."

See how powerful were the words that were spoken by the Caliph al-Mustanṣir. The king of Spain heard them and hardly had he understood them but he fell down prostrating once again, praying for the Caliph because of his showing compassion and granting protection.

If we move on to Granada, the grandeur of the construction of the Alhambra palace will become apparent to us. It was a marvel that astonished all who looked at it. Despite the passage of time it is still a focal point for tourists from all over the world. This palace is built on a slope overlooking the city of Granada and fertile fields covering a wide area; it is one of the most beautiful palaces in the world. It contained many rooms such as the Courtyard of the Lions, the Hall of the Two Sisters, the Hall of Justice, the Ambassadors' Hall. We cannot, in this brief discussion, describe Alhambra fully. It is sufficient for us to note the words of the French poet Victor Hugo:

> "O' Alhambra, O' Alhambra! O' palace whom the angels decorated in the most imaginative fashion and made you a marvel of harmony. O' honourable citadel, adorned with engravings of flowers and branches going into decline. When the silver rays of the moon are reflected on your walls through your arabesque arches we hear from you a voice that is magical."

To speak of the other cities of Andalusia, and their luxury and glory, would take too long. It is sufficient for us to mention here that in Seville there were six hundred looms for weaving silk alone, and it was surrounded on all sides by olive trees, hence,

there were one hundred thousand olive presses in the city for the production of olive oil.

To sum up, the cities of Spain were highly-developed and each city was famous for some kind of industry that was popular in Europe. Spain was even famous for the production of shields and helmets, which the Europeans bought wherever they could. Renault says in his book *The Attack on France* that,

"When the Arabs launched their attack from Spain on the south of France and, under the leadership of as-Samaḥ al-Khūlāni, 'Anbasah al-Kalbi and al-Hirr ath-Thaqafi, conquered the cities of Narbonne, Fort de Chonne, Avignon and Lyons, they were equipped with weapons the like of which were unavailable to the Franks."

Now let us move on to the eastern Muslim world, where we see examples of its major cities and brilliant civilization. We will limit ourselves to looking at Baghdad and how it was one of the wonders of the world when it was built, the like of which had never been seen in the ancient world.

Before it was built by the famous 'Abbasid Caliph al-Manṣūr, Baghdad was a small village where, at the start of each new year, traders would gather from places nearby. When al-Manṣūr decided to build it, he brought together engineers and people who knew about construction and surveying. Then he laid the first stone with his own hand and said, "In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. Praise be to Allah. ﴿...Verily, the earth is Allah's. He gives it as a heritage to whom He wills of His slaves; and the [blessed] end is for the *Muttaqūn* [the pious].﴾ *(Qur'an 7: 128)*." Then he said: "Build with Allah's blessing." The total amount spent on its construction was Four million and eight hundred thousand dirhams. The number of workers who laboured

on it was one hundred thousand. It was encircled by three concentric walls, and was inhabited by two million souls. The number of streets and alleys was six thousand in the eastern half and four thousand in the western half. Besides the Tigris and Euphrates, there were eleven minor rivers whose waters entered all the houses and palaces of Baghdad. Along the Tigris alone there were thirty thousand crossing points. The number of baths reached sixty thousand, but by the end of the Abbasid period this number had fallen to a little less than twenty thousand. There were three hundred thousand mosques, and among its inhabitants were innumerable scholars, literati and philosophers. We will quote here what Abu Bakr al-Khaṭīb said describing Baghdad:

"Even though we did not describe many of the features by which Allah has made it distinct from all others cities in the east and in the west, it has many good and pleasing characteristics, plentiful fresh water, beautiful and delicious fruits, beautiful locations, brilliance in craftsmanship, availability of anything one may need, freedom from manifestations of *bid'ah* (innovation), and the joy of having many learned scholars, well-versed *fuqaha'*, leading philosophers, prominent mathematicians and grammarians, leading poets, narrators of reports and lineages, literati and artists versed in all forms of art. It brings together the fruits of all times at a time, which happens in no other city on earth, especially in the autumn. If a person finds that his house is too small it is easy for him to find a better house, and he will not find it difficult to move to any part of the city he likes. If a person is fleeing from his enemy he will find someone to hide him, near or far. If he wants to move from one house or street or alley to another, it is possible for him to do so, depending on the time and circumstances. Prominent merchants, respectable

authority figures and people from leading noble families live in specific areas, and they continually send charitable donations to those who are less well-off than themselves. These are all blessings from Allah, the extent of which no one knows except Allah Himself."

And he said:

"Baghdad is unmatched by any other city in its glory and splendour, its many scholars and prominent figures, the unique nature of its elite and masses, its spaciousness, the vastness of its outskirts, the large number of its houses, alleys, streets, shops, markets, mosques, baths, and inns, its fresh air, the sweetness of its water, the coolness of its shade, the mildness of its summer and winter, the pleasantness of its spring and autumn and the great number of its inhabitants. It reached its developmental peak at the time of ar-Rashīd, when the world was peaceful, milk for nursing babies was abundant, and fields for grazing were fertile and then tribulations befell it and a succession of calamities overwhelmed its people. Its buildings were destroyed, its people moved away and until relatively recently, in spite of all its troubles and woes, it was still different to all other cities."

We will conclude this discussion with a description of its greatness at the time of al-Muqtadir Billah, and the level of glory that the caliphate reached at his time, when Baghdad was visited by the envoy of the Roman king. The palace of the Caliph was bigger than any large city in Syria nowadays. There were eleven thousand eunuchs and innumerable thousands of other servants. Each shift of caretakers numbered four thousand. When the envoy of the Roman king came to visit it, he stayed in a guest house, then the soldiers stood in ranks from the guesthouse to the Caliph's

palace, and the number of soldiers included one hundred and sixty thousand cavalry and infantry. The envoy travelled between them until he reached the palace, where he greeted the Caliph and was taken on a tour of the palace complex, which has been emptied for the occasion, leaving behind only seven thousand servants, seven hundred guards and four thousand black slaves. The stores of weaponry were opened, in which the weapons were arranged like a bridegroom's clothes. When the envoy of the Roman king entered the House of the Tree, he was stunned when he saw it. It was a tree made of silver, whose weight was five hundred thousand dirhams. It had eighteen branches, all of which had lesser branches on which there were birds of all kinds, made of gold and silver. Most of the trunk of this tree was silver, and part of it was gold, and it could sway. It had leaves of different colours which moved like the leaves of a tree stirred by the wind. All of these gold and silver birds chirped and twittered. Beside the House of the Tree there were statues of fifteen knights on fifteen horses, dressed in brocade and carrying spears, placed in a circle as if each one was chasing another. Then he was taken into the palace known as al-Firdaws, in which there were innumerable weapons. He was taken from palace to palace — within the caliph's palace complex — until he had visited twenty-three palaces. Then they came back to the court of al-Muqtadir Billāh, after having stopped to rest seven times. The historians mention that the number of carpets spread in the Caliph's palace for the visit of the Roman king's envoy was twenty-two thousand, apart from the carpets and rugs that were already in the corridors and sitting rooms. In the palaces of the Caliph's home thirty-eight thousand curtains of brocade interwoven with gold were hung. One of the palaces that the Roman king's envoy was shown on his visit was the menagerie, which contained all kinds of wild and

tame animals. He also visited the Elephant House, where there were four elephants, each of which was cared for by eight Indian people; and the Lion House where there were one hundred lions, fifty on the right and fifty on the left. Each lion was cared for by a lion-tamer, and the lions had chains of iron on their heads and necks. Undoubtedly the envoy of the Roman king was astonished when he saw the greatness of the Caliph's palace. At that time, there was no palace on the earth like this palace when he saw it.

What we have mentioned is sufficient to understand the wonders of our civilization at the peak of its greatness and power.

Symbols used in this Book

(ﷻ): *Subḥānahu wa Ta'āla* — 'The Exalted'

(ﷺ): *Ṣallā-Allāhu 'Alayhi wa Sallam* — 'Blessings and Peace be upon him'

(ﷺ): *'Alayhis-Salām* — 'May peace be upon him'

(رضي الله عنه): *Raḍia Allāhu 'Anhū* — 'May Allah be pleased with him'

(رضي الله عنها): *Raḍia Allāhu 'Anhā* — 'May Allah be pleased with her'

Transliteration Chart

a	أ
ā	آ . ى
b	ب
t	ت
h or t (when followed by another Arabic word)	ة
th	ث
j	ج
ḥ	ح
kh	خ
d	د
dh	ذ
r	ر
z	ز
s	س
sh	ش
ṣ	ص
ḍ	ض
ṭ	ط

ظ	dh
ع	‘
غ	gh
ف	f
ق	q
ك	k
ل	l
م	m
ن	n
ه ـه ـه ـه	h
و	w
و (as vowel)	ū or oo
ي	y
ي (as vowel)	ī or ee
ء	’ (Omitted in initial position)

ـَ	Fatḥah	a
ـِ	Kasrah	i
ـُ	Ḍammah	u
ـّ	Shaddah	Double letter
ـْ	Sukūn	Absence of vowel

Glossary

ʿĀlamīn	عالمين	:	Lit. Worlds, Universe; meaning Mankind, Jinns, and all that exists
Aḥādīth	أحاديث	:	Sing. Hadith; records of sayings and acts of the last Prophet
Ahl adh-Dhimmah	أهل الذِمَّة	:	Non-Muslims under Islamic state
Al-Asbāṭ	الاسباط	:	Sing. *Sibṭ*; grand children
Al-Birr	البِرّ	:	Piety, righteousness, every act of obedience to Allah
Al-Ḥūr al-ʿIyn	الحور العين	:	Houris, Beautiful maidens of Paradise
Al-Maʿrūf	المعروف	:	Good deeds
Al-Munkar	المُنكر	:	Disbelief, polytheism, forbidden, evil deeds
Amīr al-Muʾminīn	أمير المؤمنين	:	Lit. Leader of the believers; title for the Early Muslim rulers
Anf	أنف	:	Nose
Asnān	أسنان	:	Sing. *Sinn*; Teeth
ʿAṣr	عَصر	:	Afternoon, Afternoon prayer, a chapter in the Qur’an
At-Taqwah	التقوى	:	Piety
Aṭ-Ṭayyibāt	الطيّبات	:	Sing. *Ṭayyib*; Pure, noble and good, delicious

Baṭn	بطن	:	Stomach
Bay'ah	بَيعة	:	A pledge of allegiance
Bayt al-Māl	بيت المال	:	Treasury of the Islamic state
Bid'ah	بِدعة	:	Any reprehensible innovated practice in religion, innovation
Dimāgh	دِماغ	:	Brain
Fāsiqūn	فاسِقون	:	Sing. *Fāsiq*; Disbelievers and disobedient to Allah
Faḥsha'	فحشاء	:	Obscene, vulgar, shameful illegal sexual intercourse, sin, evil deeds
Fajr	الفجر	:	Dawn, early morning before sunrise, dawn prayer, a name of a chapter in the Qur'an
Faqīh	فقيه	:	Pl. *Fuqaha*; Islamic jurist
Fatāwa	فَتاوى	:	Sing. *Fatwa*; Religious rulings by reputed religious scholar/s
Fiqh	فِقْه	:	Jurisprudence (Islamic)
Fitnah	فِتنة	:	Torment, trial
Ḥadd	حَدّ	:	Islamic penal code
Ḥalāl	حَلال	:	Lawful things, things permitted in Islam
Ḥalq	حَلق	:	Shaving, throat
Ḥarām	حرام	:	Forbidden, things and acts not allowed in Islam
Ijāzah	إجازة	:	License, permission

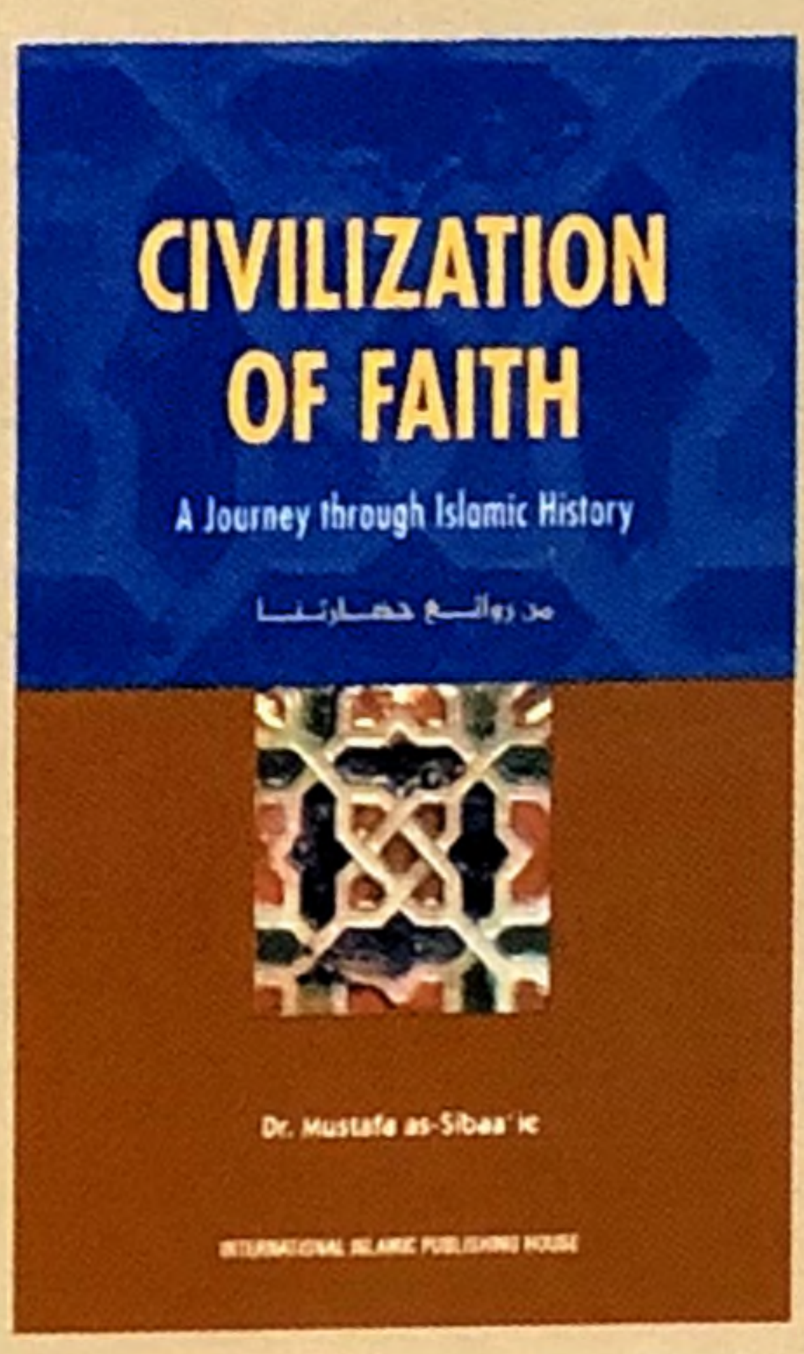
Insha' Allah	إن شاء الله	:	Allah willing
Iqamāt aṣ-Ṣalāh	إقامة الصّلاة	:	Call for starting the prayer
Isra'	إسراء	:	Night journey of the last Prophet from Makkah to Jerusalem
Jāhiliyah	جاهِلية	:	Ignorance, Pre-Islamic, non-Islamic
Jihād	جِهاد	:	Lit. Struggle; struggle in the way of Allah, Holy war
Jizyah	جِزية	:	Tribute, tax paid by non-Muslim subjects in an Islamic state in lieu of living under the protection of the state
Jubbah	جُبّة	:	Cloak
Jumjumah	جُمجُمة	:	Skull
Kāfir	كافِر	:	Pl. *Kuffār*; Disbeliever
Khadd	خَدّ	:	Cheek
Khalīfah	خَليفَة	:	Lit. Successor; Caliph, A title for the ruler of the Muslim Ummah after the Prophet
Khuṭbah	خُطْبَة	:	Sermon, speech delivered about the religion by Imam on Friday and 'Eid days. Sermon before matrimonial rituals
Kuttāb	كُتّاب	:	Sing. *Kātib*; Scribes, an elementary school
Madh-hab	مَذهَب	:	School of (religious) thought
Madrasah	مَدْرَسة	:	School, place of learning

Maghreb	مَغْرِب	:	Evening, Evening prayer, North Africa
Mahr	مَهر	:	Dower, dowry, a sum paid by the bride-groom to the bride
Majlis	مَجلِس	:	Assembly, sitting, council
Miḥrab	محراب	:	Prayer niche
Mi'rāj	مِعَراج	:	Ascension, Ascension of the last Prophet to the throne of Allah (Qur'an 17: 1)
Miskīn	مِسكين	:	Poor
Muadh-dhin	مؤذِّن	:	Caller for the prayer
Muhājirīn	مُهاجِرين	:	Sing. *Muhājir*; Emigrants, Muslim emigrants who left their homes at Makkah and came to and settled at Madīnah at the time of the Prophet
Muḥtasib	مُحْتسِب	:	An official whose role was similar in some ways to that of a modern policeman
Mujāhideen	مُجاهِدين	:	Sing. *Mujāhid*; People fighting in the way of Allah
Muṣḥaf	مُصْحَف	:	A copy of the Qur'an
Muttaqūn	مُتّقون	:	Sing. *Muttaqi*; righteous people
Nafl	نَفْل	:	Voluntary acts, voluntary prayer
Nashīd	نشيد	:	Islamic songs
Niqābah	نِقابة	:	Guild
Qāḍi	قاضي	:	Judge of Islamic court

Qiblah	قِبْلة	:	Ka'bah, all Muslims face it while praying
Ṣaḥābah	صَحابة	:	Sing. *Ṣaḥābi*; the Companions of the Prophet Muhammad
Ṣalāh	صلاة / صلوٰة	:	The prayer, obligatory / optional
Salām	سلام	:	Peace
Shari'ah	شريعة	:	Islamic law
Shayṭān	شيطان	:	Satan
Sujūd as-Sahw	سُجود السَّهو	:	The prostration of forgetfulness
Ṭāghūt	طاغوت	:	Lit. one who transgresses his limits; In Islamic terminology the one who rebels against Allah and imposes his rebellious will on others
Tafsīr	تَفْسير	:	Exegesis, explanation of the Qur'an
Tārīkh	تاريخ	:	History
Tasbīḥ	تَسْبيح	:	Saying "*Subḥān-Allah*"; All Glory be to Allah
Tawḥīd	توحيد	:	Monotheism, belief in One and only God
Udhn	أُذُن	:	Ear
Ummah	أُمَّة	:	Nation
Waqf	وَقف	:	Endowment, Trust
Wuḍū'	وضوء	:	Ritual ablution for prayer etc.
Dhālimūn	ظالِمون	:	Sing. *Dhālim*; Cruel, violent, wrongdoer

Zāwiyah زاوية : Corner, place of learning and study

Dhulm ظُلْم : Wrong, i.e. by worshipping others besides Allah; injustice



We are living at a time when western civilization is at its peak and the Muslim nations are at their weakest point, dazzled by the power of the west with its wealth, means and scientific and technological advantages. Muslims who do not read history, may well be unaware of the fact that this has not always been the case. A few hundred years ago, it was just the opposite. The Muslim ummah was the superpower of the age and the Muslims were the leaders in culture, science and technology. The cities of the Muslim world were centers of learning to which people came from far and wide, including – as in the case of Muslim Spain – the lands of Christian Europe.

The Muslims, at one time, were the most technologically advanced civilization on earth, and the uniqueness of their civilization lies in the fact that although they achieved a great deal in materialistic terms, they remained a compassionate society where the poor and disadvantaged were cared for.

This book is a reminder to Muslims that they have a glorious past and that for many centuries they had the upper hand over other nations. They became masters of the world at the time when they adhered to Islam. When they became preoccupied with worldly gain and the pursuit of luxury, then decline set in.

If the Muslims adhere to Islam and take their religion faithfully, they will, once again, be supported by the Will of Allah and will again be able to lead the world in all spheres of life.